This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

3433 06828285 8

Beddom
ZZ

TWENTY
SHORT DISCOURSES

ADAPTED TO

VILLAGE WORSHIP,

OR

THE DEVOTIONS OF THE FAMILY.

VOLUME III.

Sixth Edition.

PUBLISHED FROM THE MANUSCRIPTS OF THE LATE

REV. B. BEDDOME, A. M.

LONDON:

PUBLISHED BY SAMUEL BURTON, LEADENHALL STREET
AND SIMPKIN & MARSHALL, STATIONERS' COURT.

1824.

SERMON XI.
ZECH. ix. 12.
Turn you to the strong hold, ye prisoners of

SERMON XII.
ACTS ix. 4.
Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? .....

SERMON XIII.
MARK x. 26.
Who then can be saved? .....

SERMON XIV.
ACTS xi. 23.
Who, when he came, and had seen the grace
glad .....

SERMON XV.
ROM. viii. 37.
In all these things we are more than conque
him that loved us .....

SERMON XVI.
2 PET. iii. 14.
Be diligent, that ye may be found of him in

SERMON XVII.
ACTS xvi. 14.
Whose heart the Lord opened, that she atten
things which were spoken of Paul .....

SERMON XVIII.
1 PET. i. 16.
Be ye holy, for I am holy .....

SERMON XIX.
HOSEA viii. 2.
Israel shall cry unto me, My God, we know

SERMON XX.
ROM. viii. 28.
We know that all things work together for
that love God, to them who are called acc
purpose .....

SERMON I.

2 Tim. ii. 7.

Consider what I say.

The venerable apostle, being now such a one as Paul the aged, addresses himself to Timothy as his own son in the faith, on the important work of the ministry; and in doing this, he calls up his attention, and places the solemn charge full before him. But if that which related to the salvation of others demanded so much serious consideration, surely that which concerns our own salvation can do no less; and if that depends on the belief of the truth, it can no less depend on the attention we pay to truth. The best instruction may be lost upon us for want of it, and we may read and hear in vain. It becomes us therefore diligently to attend to what is spoken, and so to "consider" it as to ponder it in our hearts, and weigh the matter well.

Confining our remarks at present to our hearing the word, we shall first notice—the manner in which we are to consider it—and secondly, the motives which should lead to it.

I. Shew in what manner we are to hear the word.

1. Consider well the matter or import of what is spoken. Whether it be doctrinal or practical, whether it proclaims the terrors of the law or the glorious grace of the gospel, whether it relates to things generally

believed, or in some degree doubtful, of grea
importance, it ought to be well consider
When Baruch the scribe read the words of
to the king, he attended to three or four lea
and then took the roll and cast the whole of i
fire. (Jer. xxxvi. 23.) Thus too many do by
they hear till they meet with something tha
them, and then all the rest is rejected. S
incorrectness or inadvertency; or it may be
timent which militates against their preconc
nions, awakens their prejudices, renders t
unprofitable, and turns the food into poiso
not be so with you; but "consider what I s

2. Attend to the truth and propriety of wh
vered. "The ear trieth words, as the mou
meat;" and if we be circumcised in heart an
shall try the spirits of men whether they b
and the doctrine they preach, whether it be
to godliness. "Itching ears" are forbidden
ing ears are commanded. One and another
to us in the name of the Lord, and this and th
affirmed as true; but it becomes us, like
Bereans, to search the scriptures daily, whe
things be so or not. The bible is the only s
truth; and if any man speak, let him speak a
cles of God. Let us consider what we hear,
sult our own understanding; but let us not
the test of truth, but employ it as the mean
taining what is, and what is not, agreeable
erring word. Reason must never go alone,
the scriptures for her guide, and then she ma
safety. "In thy light we shall see light;"
out this we are all in darkness. The rigl
vate judgment has been too often denied,
duty too much neglected, but both are s
by the word of truth. "Let the prophets s
or three, and let the others judge." In
faith and worship, the apostles themselves

thority: "Not that we have dominion over your
" says Paul; "but are helpers of your joy."
tever be our affection and esteem for him who
ts, our assent to what he delivers must only be pro-
oned to the evidence he may bring to support it.
od has given him a mouth to speak, so he has also
us an understanding to judge. We must therefore
nothing upon trust; but "try all things, and hold
hat which is good." 1 Cor. xiv. 29. 2 Cor. i. 24.
Consider the weight and importance of what is
ered. All divine truth is important, but every
of it is not alike so. There are principles which
the foundation, and affect the salvation of our
; these therefore claim our highest consideration.
work of a faithful minister is no light concern:
he has addressed God in your name, he then
sses you in God's name. Having to deal with
bout your immortal souls, an invisible and future
he may well say with Moses, "Set your hearts
all the words which I testify unto you this day;
is not a vain thing for you, because it is your
(Deut. xxxii. 47.) Hearing the word is a divine
ance, and the manner of hearing should corre-
with its end and design; and this is not to gratify
riosity, nor merely to inform the understanding,
purify our hearts and regulate our lives. Every
n we hear will either be to us a savour of life unto
or a savour of death unto death. If the gospel be
e power of God unto salvation, it will both jus-
d aggravate our condemnation, and prove a sore
ent where it is not received as a special mercy.
the great Teacher and pattern of all other
ers so frequently used that solemn warning—"He
ath ears to hear, let him hear! Let him dili-
weigh what he hears, and carefully understand
nprove it.

Consider the personal concern you have in the
delivered. We must hear for ourselves, and not

for others. When the evil of sin is displayed, it is of our sin; when the need of a Saviour is pointed out, it is our need of him; when duties and privileges are recommended, it is to us they are recommended. The minister is as much addressing himself to every particular person in the assembly, as if there were only one individual to address. Speaking of Ephraim, the Lord says, "I have written *to him* the great things of my law." The preacher brings a message from God *unto thee*, O hearer, whoever thou art. Let then thine ears be attentive! It is thy case he endeavours to meet, thine advantage he seeks, and thy salvation that he ardently desires. Whether he preach the law, it is to awaken thy conscience; or the gospel, it is to provide a healing balm for thy soul. If he set forth the joys of heaven, it is to allure thee; or the torments of hell, it is to alarm thee. Dost thou hear them with self-application, and consider thine immediate interest in the things spoken? The word preached will not profit us, unless it be mixed with faith in them that hear it. Hear it therefore, and know thou it for thy good.

II. The motives which should induce us well to consider what we hear.

1. Think, in whose name the ministers of the gospel speak, and whose person they represent. If they spoke in their own name, it would be only common civility to consider what they say, especially in matters of so much importance. We hearken to a physician when he prescribes for our health, and to a counsellor when he is to plead our cause; and shall we not much more hearken to the servants of the most high God, who shew unto us the way of salvation? But they speak not in their own name: they are ambassadors for Christ. They act by his authority, receive their commission from him, and in his stead beseech you to be reconciled *to God. The* apostle's description of the work and

office of a faithful minister is very impressive: it is not he only who speaks to us, but God also by him. For "He that receiveth you," saith our Lord to his disciples, "receiveth me; and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me." And, said Jehoshaphat to the men of Judah, "Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established: believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper." If we believe not Moses and the prophets, neither should we believe, though one rose from the dead: we might be more alarmed, but should not be more profited. "The house of Israel will not hearken unto thee," saith the Lord, "for they will not hearken unto me." Nevertheless they shall know that a prophet has been among them, and sinners also shall know whose word they have despised. Ezek. iii. 7.

2. Consider the great end they aim at in their ministrations. They seek not yours, but you; not your substance, but your souls. When they preach, "warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom," it is "that they may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." If this be not the fruit of their labour, their labour is lost: "for what is our hope," say they, "or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy." Why do they labour in the word and doctrine, in season and out of season, but that they may turn sinners from the error of their ways, and save their souls from death? They travail in birth until Christ be formed in us; and surely the least that we can do is to consider what they say.

3. By the word that we hear we shall be judged at the last day. If we receive the truth in love, it will be a witness for us; but if otherwise, it will be a swift witness against us. "He that rejecteth me," saith Christ, "and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." (John xii. 48.) You

hear the law, and will be judged by the law; you hear the gospel, and will be judged according to the gospel: and if you despise both law and gospel, both law and gospel will join in your condemnation. We shall be accountable in the great day both for the knowledge we had and did not improve, and for that which we might have had but neglected. Sermons slighted, forgotten, and disregarded, will form no inconsiderable part of the charge which the sinner's own conscience will hereafter exhibit against him, and that consideration which was wanting on earth will be his torment in hell. Now he will not consider when he might: then he shall consider when he would not. "The anger of the Lord shall not return, until he have executed, until he have performed the thoughts of his heart: in the latter days ye shall consider it perfectly." Jer. xxiii. 20.

(1.) We may learn from hence, how just God will appear in the destruction of thoughtless and careless sinners. They neither repented nor believed, neither would they consider. They neither exercised any gracious disposition, nor would they so much as exercise their reason. Light was come into the world, but they loved darkness rather than light. "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people do not consider. Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil-doers, children that are corrupters!" Isai. i. 3, 4.

(2.) We see what it is that supports faithful ministers in their work, and prevents their sinking into despondency,—the hope that God may lead some of their hearers to serious reflection, who have hitherto been careless. Hence they still go forth, bearing precious seed, and hope to come again with rejoicing, bringing their sheaves with them. Thus also the Lord encouraged the prophet: "Son of man, thou dwellest in the midst of a rebellious house: which have eyes to *see, and see not; they* have ears to hear, and hear not—

t it may be they will consider, though they be a re-
llious house." Ezek. xii. 2, 3.
(3.) While we labour to exhort, we would also
d our fervent prayer, that our instructions and ex-
rtations may not be in vain. "Consider what I say,
d the Lord give thee understanding in all things!"
ıen.

Amidst displays of wrath and love,
What stubborn wretches, Lord, are we!
Unmov'd by all the joys of heaven,
Unaw'd by endless misery.

With what a base contempt we treat
Thy threat'nings and thy promises!
Duty neglect, and mercy slight,
Nor fear t'offend, nor seek to please.

Could angels weep, they'd weep for us;
Break thou these rocky hearts, O God!
O let us melt beneath thy grace,
Nor feel the terrors of thy rod!

SERMON II.

EZEK. XX. 41.

I will accept you with your sweet savour.

IN the foregoing verses, God promises the children of Israel that he would establish his worship amongst them, even in his holy mountain; and here, that he would take delight in it, and would bless them. To be accepted of him is our highest happiness: it is the foretaste of heaven, and an earnest of the full fruition. The approbation of our fellow-creatures is desirable, and it was well for Mordecai that he was accepted of the multitude of his brethren: but how much more desirable is it to be approved and accepted of God! May this be the principal aim in all our religious exercises!

Let us then enquire what is implied in this acceptance, and with what it must be accompanied. "I will accept you with your sweet savour."

I. What is implied in our being accepted with God.

1. It supposes a drawing near to him on our part. Acceptance on one part implies application on the other. "Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to *approach unto thee.*" There is a drawing near in all the exercises of private devotion: every lifting up of the heart, and the expression of inward *desire, is* an approach to God. The tendency of sin

is to alienate the heart, and destroy all desire after him: this is seen in the conduct of the prodigal, who left his father's house and went into a far country. The tendency of grace is to bring us back, and bring us near. "Behold, we come unto thee; for thou art the Lord our God." Coming to him is not only expressive of love and confidence, and of the going forth of the soul after God; but it includes the whole of religious worship. Those who worshipped at the altar are described as *the comers thereunto;* and of believers, in reference to Christ as the foundation, it is said, *To whom coming*, as unto a living stone. Our whole life should be a continual coming unto God by him. Duties should closely follow one another, like the successive products of the field, and even our ordinary concerns in life should be so conducted as to bring us nearer and still nearer the Lord. The great object of the christian life is to maintain an habitual spirituality, to be in the fear of the Lord all the day long, as well as when we are in the immediate discharge of holy duties, that so our intercourse with heaven may be uninterrupted.

2. Acceptance implies approbation and delight on God's part, as well as an approach on ours. "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." We might be rejected, even though we come to him: but the promise not only secures us from this, but insures to us the most gracious acceptance: the Lord will receive such with infinite good will, and embrace them in the arms of love. Like Noah, they find grace in the eyes of the Lord: for "the righteous Lord loveth righteousness, his countenance doth behold the upright. He frowns upon the ungodly, but smiles upon those that seek him; and though despised and hated of the world, they are the objects of his delight.

3. When God accepts, he not only approves, but grants some visible token of his favour. "I will accept you with your sweet savour," and you shall know it, yea, and the world shall know it. When the

Publican had prayed, " God be merciful to me a sin ner," *he went down to his house justified:* he came t the temple trembling, and went away rejoicing, hi soul being refreshed with a sense of pardoning mercy " Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righte ousness, those that remember thee in thy ways—Tho shalt call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry and he shall say, Here I am." And when God ac cepted Job, he did it openly, and made his friends t know it, and to bring their offerings to him that h might present them before the Lord. Those that honou him he will honour; and with the upright, he will shev himself upright. " All flesh shall know that I the Lor am thy Saviour, and thy Redeemer, the mighty one c Jacob." Isai. xlix. 26.

4. Our persons must be accepted before our service can be so, and the latter are accepted for the sake c the former. " God had respect to Abel, and his offer ing; but to Cain, and his offering, he had not respect. In both these instances the person is put first, as th more immediate object of acceptance, and then th offering; and this shews that the different treatmen they met with, was not altogether owing to th different nature of the offerings they brought, thoug Abel's consisted of the firstlings of the flock, and Cain' of the fruits of the ground, but to the difference o character and condition between the offerers. Th one came in the exercise of faith, and the other not " By faith, Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice tha Cain;" and without faith it is impossible to pleas God. Acceptance ends in the service, but begins i the person: " I will accept you with your sweet sa vour."—Many there are, indeed, who hope to com mend themselves to God by a multitude of duties, an are ready to think it hard if they may not be accepte on that ground. " Wherefore have we fasted, say they and thou seest not? Wherefore have we afflicted ou soul, and thou takest no knowledge?" (Isai. lviii. 3.

All this flows from a spirit of self-righteousness, which God abhors; and he can no more accept the services of such, than a prince could the offering of a condemned malefactor. Let but the curse be removed, and the sinner shall be accepted; and when he is so, his offering shall not be despised, though it be only that of a broken heart and a contrite spirit. Psal. li. 17.

II. Consider what must accompany our being accepted of God: "I will accept you *with your sweet savour.*"

The illusion is to the burnt-offerings and peace-offerings under the law, which are said to be of a sweet-smelling savour unto the Lord. The holy fragrance rendered them pleasing in his sight; and such are the exercises of grace in the offerings which we present. This leads us to observe,

1. That our approaches to God must be accompanied with spiritual and holy dispositions, or they cannot be acceptable to him. "I will accept you with your sweet savour," but not without it. Duties without grace in exercise are like dead carcases, not fit to be presented before the Lord. To serve him acceptably, with reverence and godly fear, we must have grace; and not only have grace implanted, but grace in exercise. The Lord's people are to him a kingdom of priests; and their work is to offer spiritual sacrifices, holy and acceptable, by Jesus Christ. The various graces when in exercise yield a sweet savour, like the holy unction and the incense, which consisted of the richest odours. The precious ointment that was poured upon Aaron's head was as the dew of Hermon, and as that which descended upon the mountains of Zion. And of the anointed Saviour it is said, "All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces." And when the beauty and glory of the church is described, it is said, "Who is this that cometh out

of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh, and frankincense, with all powders of the merchant?" As the Lord smelt a sweet savour in Noah's sacrifice, so he delights in and graciously accepts the offerings and prayers of his saints. It is the exercise of grace that makes every part of religion sweet to us, as well as well-pleasing to God. Prayer, reading, hearing, when they savour of faith and love, are sweet, and shed a rich perfume; but otherwise they are neither pleasing to God nor man.

2. Though the exercise of grace in holy duties is pleasing to God, yet they are accepted only through the sacrifice of Christ. The numerous services and sacrifices under the law were acceptable only as they referred to him, and were typical of his atoning blood; and our services under the gospel are only so as they are performed by faith in him, and are perfumed with his merits and intercession. "Christ hath loved us, and given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour;" and now at the golden altar he offers his much incense with the prayers of the saints. This it is that takes away the iniquity of our holy things, and becomes the only ground of acceptance. First he is accepted, and then we in him. "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased;" but it is in him only that God can be pleased with us. Duties from us send forth an ill savour, but receive a sweet smell from Christ. But for the savour of his sacrifice, the most elevated strains of devotion would be an abomination to the Lord. It is this which makes the saints and their service like what Isaac said of Jacob—"as the smell of a field which the Lord hath blessed."

(1.) How dreadful then is the state of the unregenerate! However numerous and decent in the eyes of men their services may be, yet as they neither savour of grace nor of the Saviour's sacrifice, they will be utterly rejected, and themselves cast out. "When they

fast, I will not hear their cry; and when they offer burnt-offering and an oblation, I will not accept them." Jer. xiv. 12.

(2.) How happy for the people of God to find grace in his sight, and what encouragement to abound in holy duties! "I will accept you with your sweet savour." The good will of him that dwelt in the bush will more than counterbalance all the ill will of creatures: and if he accepts us, no matter of whom we are rejected. His approbation will be a rich reward for all our services, and will be the crowning blessing another day.

(3.) Let acceptance with God be the great object aimed at in all our religious duties, and let us rest in nothing short of it. This it was that Paul sought after in all he did: "Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him." Let us then "go to the King with ointment, and increase our perfumes;" let us go with grace in our hearts, and Christ in our arms; and he will accept us with our sweet savour. 2 Cor. v. 9. Isai. lvii. 9.

How shall the sons of men appear,
Great God, before thine awful bar!
How may the guilty hope to find
Acceptance with th'eternal Mind!

Thy blood, dear Jesus, thine alone,
Hath sovereign virtue to atone:
Here we will rest our only plea,
When we approach, great God, to thee!

SERMON III.

LUKE xix. 41, 42.

And when he was come near, he beheld the city and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes.

OUR blessed Lord generally travelled on foot; but when he went up to Jerusalem to suffer, he rode, not only to shew his readiness to endure the cross, but that the words of the prophet might be fulfilled:—"Behold, thy King cometh unto thee! He is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass." He came near the city, as he had often done before, and had paid many a gracious visit to its ungrateful inhabitants. There he had preached the gospel, wrought many miracles, and testified, saying, "Be ye sure that the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you." And now, when he was probably descending from the Mount of Olives, from whence he had a full view of the city, it is said, *He beheld it*—not indeed with complacency, as God beheld Ephraim; nor with power, as Christ looked on Zaccheus and Peter; but with pity and compassion. The word here used signifies, not merely to look, but to look earnestly and consider an object thoroughly. How happy would it have been for the inhabitants of this city, if they had returned look for look, and had their eyes fixed upon the Saviour as his were upon

them! Perhaps the rest of the company beheld Jerusalem with wonder, admiring its lofty domes, its stately structures, and magnificent temple; and might be ready to say, What city is like unto this great city? But Christ was differently affected: he feels for its miseries, and pours out a lamentation.—Let us now consider more particularly what he did, and what he said on this affecting occasion.

I. What our Lord did: "He beheld the city, and wept over it."

They were the tears of an affectionate father over his rebellious children, or of a compassionate judge pronouncing sentence upon a criminal. He was not elated by the plaudits of the multitude, who cried, "Hosannah to the Son of David; blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." He knew what was in man, and that those who praised him to-day would be as ready to accuse and condemn him on the morrow. "He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;" and now we see his tears, and the sorrows of his heart enlarged. Once indeed he rejoiced in spirit; but more than once he wept. Jerusalem was bid to rejoice; but he sees occasion to mourn, and now mingles the triumphs with his tears. Such tears from such eyes could not be without a cause. He who never spake a word without sufficient reason could never weep in vain. His tears were those of the sincerest and deepest sorrow: for he who now weeps over sinners could afterwards shed his blood for them. Like Jacob, he often wept and made supplication when we do not hear of it; and like David, rivers of tears ran down his eyes, because of the people who kept not his law; and no wonder then that "his countenance was more marred than that of any man." He wept at the grave of Lazarus, and his soul was grieved for the affliction of Martha and Mary. As the head of the

church he is still touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and in all our afflictions he himself is afflicted.

"In sorrow drown'd, but not in sorrow lost."

Now he weeps over Jerusalem, and his sorrow is deep and pungent. In weeping for Lazarus he mourned a departed friend, one whom he loved, and who was saved from the sorrows of this world; but here he weeps over dead sinners, who were exposed to the sufferings of the next. We do not find that Jonah wept over Nineveh, though there were more than six-score thousand persons that could not discern between the right hand and the left; yea, he was rather displeased that God's threatenings were not executed upon it. But how different from the temper of the servant was that of the Master! "Jonah made himself a booth, and sat under it in the shadow, till he might see what would become of the city." But when Jesus was come near to Jerusalem, "He beheld the city and wept over it." He wept for those who wept not for themselves, and because they did not weep for themselves; not for any disappointment respecting them, for things were as he knew they would be; but for their obstinacy and approaching ruin. More particularly,

1. He wept for the sins they had committed, and the evil treatment which he himself should receive at their hands. He had no sin of his own to grieve or to die for. "He knew no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth;" but as he bled, so he also wept for the sins of others. To weep for sin is in us an evidence of grace; and in him it was a sign of the tenderest compassion. The Jews, his own people, had lost all sense of true religion, and made it void by their traditions; they had killed the prophets, rejected the gospel, and would shortly destroy the Prince of life: he is grieved for the hardness of their hearts, and weeps over their aggravated guilt.

2. He foresaw the calamities that were coming upon them, and desired not the woeful day. Their city and temple should be destroyed, and their whole nation dispersed into all parts of the earth. They had abused their privileges, and now they should be deprived of them: they had gloried in their shame, and should now be ashamed of their glory: they had been slaves to their lusts, and should now be slaves to their enemies. When Jeremiah saw that there was no hope of recovering Israel from their backslidings, nor of averting the threatened captivity, but that they would be cut off by the most awful judgments, he wished that his head were waters, and his eyes a fountain of tears, that he might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of his people. He had wept much, but wanted to weep more. But awful as were those days of evil, they were not such as now awaited this devoted city; for such there never had been, neither should there be again. These the Saviour had in prospect, and his soul is troubled for them. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem!"

3. Spiritual judgments also awaited them, and this was matter of still greater lamentation. Would they but turn to Him who smote them, and in the time of their affliction seek him early, there would still be something to mitigate the calamity: but no, they would be as much infatuated as they were afflicted. They were given up to blindness of mind, and hardness of heart. They would obstinately persist in rejecting the gospel, and with the most inveterate malice would persecute the preachers of it, till at length they should be destroyed, and that without remedy.

4. The final consequence of all this also affected the compassionate Saviour; namely, their everlasting ruin in the world to come. Paul could not speak of some without weeping, when he considered that their end would be destruction; and this it was that made the Saviour weep. When he himself was about to suffer,

he forbid the daughters of Jerusalem to weep for him, and told them to weep for themselves and their children, and here he also could weep with them. The impending ruin of their city and nation, and above all, the final ruin of so many immortal souls, touched his tender heart, and caused his tears to flow. Never did that face appear more beautiful and lovely than when thus bedewed. It is said that Xerxes looked upon his vast army and wept, to think that in less than a hundred years not one of them would be left alive. The prospect of such mortality affected him; but it was the state of souls dead in sin that affected Christ. Yet the time is coming when he will say to those whom he once wept over, and say it without any pity in his countenance or compassion in his heart, "Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity—Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels!"

II. Consider what our Lord said as well as did, when he came near and beheld the city—"If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes."

If thou, so ancient and populous a city, the city of David, the seat of the temple and worship of God—if thou, even thou, O Jerusalem, hadst known and considered the things which belong to thy present and everlasting peace—thou wouldst have repented and wept for thyself, and my tears might well have been spared. But now thy destruction is at hand, and these things are hid from thine eyes!—Here observe,

1. The whole of religion is expressed by knowledge: "If thou hadst known." Not however that kind of knowledge which is merely speculative, but such as sanctifies the heart and influences the conduct; that holy wisdom which cometh from above. The begin-

ning of true religion is thus expressed: "I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the Lord.—God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." And when the prevalence of true religion is spoken of, it is represented by the general diffusion of this knowledge: "All shall know me from the least to the greatest—The earth shall be full of the knowledge of his glory, as the waters cover the sea." Jer. xxiv. 7. 2 Cor. iv. 6. Heb. viii. 11. Isai. xi. 9.

2. That which it chiefly concerns us to know is, "the things which belong to our peace." It is the gospel only that proclaims peace to a guilty world, and it is by the knowledge of this that we have peace with God. The sacrifice of Christ laid the foundation for it, and faith in him gives peace to the conscience. "He is our peace:" and "being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." But this only can be maintained by a holy and heavenly frame of mind: a person may as well expect life without breathing, as peace without piety; peace and purity are inseparable. Wicked men though they may not feel much uneasiness, yet are strangers to real peace. "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." They may be sensible and intelligent in other things, but are wholly unacquainted with the things which belong to their peace; and though they flatter themselves in their own eyes, yet their iniquity shall be found to be hateful.

3. There is a time to which this knowledge is confined, and which is here called "this thy day." To shew the uncertainty and shortness of its duration, it is called a day; and may be meant of the term of life, or the season of opportunity. Such a day the Jews enjoyed under the ministry of Christ; and we now enjoy a day of gospel light and liberty, which if it be slighted and abused, God may justly give us up to

final impenitence. The Spirit may cease to strive, and Christ to knock; and the awful sentence may be pronounced, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still." Rev. xxii. 11.

4. When this time is elapsed, our case will be for ever hopeless: Now the things which belong unto thy peace "are hid from thine eyes!" Now all the preaching and hearing will be of no use: it is no longer an accepted time or day of salvation. The decree is gone forth, and will certainly be executed. That light which you despised is now withdrawn, and a night of gloomy darkness is spread over you. You would have none of God's counsel, and he will have none of your prayers. Your convictions are gone, to return no more. You slighted the means, and shall no longer enjoy them. This is a dreadful case, whether it take place at death, or before, as it has done in some instances. "Because I have purged thee, and thou wast not purged, thou shalt not be purged from thy filthiness any more, till I have caused my fury to rest upon thee. I the Lord have spoken it: it shall come to pass, and I will do it: I will not go back, neither will I spare, neither will I repent." Ezek. xxiv. 13, 14.

Improvement.

(1.) Did Christ weep for sinners; and shall they not weep for themselves? Does not God call us to weeping; and does not our case call for it? Let us look to him whom we have pierced, and mourn. Let us be in the gall of bitterness till the bond of iniquity be broken. O that God may take away the heart of stone, and give a heart of flesh!

(2.) Let us beware of rejecting the gospel, and trifling with oru privileges, lest we be given up to final impenitence. Insensibility is the forerunner of

destruction. "Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you; for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. While ye have the light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light." John xii. 35, 36.

(3.) Let those who are truly acquainted with the things which belong to their peace be thankful, and adore the grace which has made them to differ. "Ye were once darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord. God is the Lord which hath shewed us light; bind the sacrifice with cords unto the horns of the altar." Psal. cxviii. 27.

Did Christ o'er sinners weep;
And shall our cheeks be dry?
Let floods of penitential grief
Burst forth from every eye.

The Son of God in tears,
Angels with wonder see!
Be thou astonish'd, O my soul,
He shed those tears for thee.

He wept that we might weep,
Each sin demands a tear;
In heav'n alone no sin is found,
And there's no weeping there.

SERMON IV.

Jer. xv. 15.

Remember me, and visit me.

THIS is what we desire and expect from an inti
friend. If he be at a distance, we love that he sh
remember us; and if there be nothing to prevent,
he should visit us. "Think on me," said Jos
"when it shall be well with thee." We desire
presence of a friend, to direct us in ur difficu
and comfort us under our sorrows. It is the natu
christian friendship especially, freely to unbosom
selves to each other; to weep with them that wee
rejoice with them that do rejoice, to bear each ot
burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. Even
bowels of an apostle have sometimes been thus
freshed, as well as those of weaker christians. W
Paul saw some of the brethren who met him o
way to Rome, "he thanked God and took coura
And he longed to see his friends at that place, "
I may be comforted," said he, "together with yo
the mutual faith both of you and me." Acts xxviii
Rom. i. 12.

But if it be desirable to be remembered by our
thren, and to enjoy their company and converse;
much more for God to remember us with the fa
which he beareth unto his people, and to visit us
his salvation! This is the import of the prop
prayer. He was forgotten and forsaken by his

people, and had suffered rebuke from his persecutors; and if the Lord did not think upon him, he must perish among the captives. "O Lord," says he, "remember me, and visit me!"

I. Consider the prophet's prayer.—He offers up two requests, and they are such as every good man would offer.

1. "Remember me," O Lord! It is our duty to remember our Creator, especially in the days of our youth; and if we do so, we may hope that he will remember us; yea, it will be an evidence of it; for as we love him because he first loved us, so if we remember him it is because he first remembered us.

There is a sense in which God may be said to remember his people so as to take particular knowledge of them, and all that pertains to them. He remembers their persons, knows their exact number, and not one of them shall be lost. "O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of me, for I have redeemed thee—Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me. Can a woman forget her suckling child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands: thy walls are continually before me." (Isai. xliv. 21, 22. xlix. 14—16.) He remembers their frailties and infirmities; how unable they are to bear affliction without his support, and hears the gentle whisper and the secret groan with parental tenderness. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him; for he knoweth our frame, he remembereth that we are dust." He also remembers their exercises of faith and love, the breathings of their souls after him, even from their earliest days, and would have them to know how pleasant and acceptable they were to him. "Thus saith the Lord, I remember

thee; the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown. Israel was holiness unto the Lord, and the first-fruits of his increase." (Jer. ii. 2, 3.) He remembers all their endeavours to serve and please him, however weak and imperfect they have been; and in instances where they pitied and relieved any of his needy and afflicted ones, without the prospect of reward, and from love to him, he will bring it to remembrance and return it all into their bosom. "For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister." (Heb. vi. 10.) All the prayers of his people are come up as a memorial before him, and shall not be forgotten. Sooner or later they shall all be answered, whether they live to see it or not; for God sometimes answers the prayers of his people after they are gone to their graves, in blessings on their connexions and posterity. They die in the Lord, and their works shall follow them. "I die," said Joseph to his brethren, "but God shall be with you." And after David had slept with his fathers, and had seen corruption, the Lord remembered him, and all his afflictions; how he sware unto the Lord, and vowed unto the mighty God of Jacob. As the Lord tells the wanderings of his people, so he also puts their tears into his bottle. All their spiritual conversation and communion with each other, all their tender concern about his kingdom and glory in the world, is graciously noticed by him, and stands upon record. When they that feared the Lord in an evil time, spake often one to another, "the Lord hearkened, and heard; and a book of remembrance was written before him, for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name." (Mal. iii. 16.) Thus God will remember his people, and thus they desire to be remembered by him.

Farther: the Lord not only remembers his people so

as to know and notice them, as he does his other works; but in a special manner, so as to delight in them to do them good, and feel a satisfaction in them. He taketh pleasure in the prosperity of his servants, and will exert himself on their behalf. He will so remember them as to direct them in their difficulties, succour them in their temptations, guard them when in danger, and bring them out of trouble. Thus God remembered Noah, and Rachel, by bringing him out of the ark, and making her the joyful mother of children. It was the prayer of the dying thief, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." I shall soon be forgotten by others, as if he had said, and some may even be glad to forget me when I am gone: but Lord, do *thou* remember me, and all will be well! Job also, in the prospect of the grave, prays that he may not be forgotten when he dwells in silence, but that he may have part in a joyful resurrection. "Appoint me a set time, and remember me." The prayer of the prophet in our text is similar to that of the devout psalmist, and corresponds with the desires of every renewed heart: "Remember me, O Lord, with the favour thou bearest unto thy people. O visit me with thy salvation; that I may see the good of thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation, that I may glory with thine inheritance." (Psal. cvi. 4, 5.) But this is not all: he prays,

2. "And visit me." This implies that where God graciously remembers any one, he will also visit them. Our visits to him are necessary, and cannot be too frequent; but without his visits to us they will be both unprofitable, and unacceptable. We must hear from him, before he can hear from us; and he must draw us, before we can run after him. God sometimes visits in a way of wrath; and if we persevere in an evil course, such visits may be expected. If we do not seek his mercy, we shall be made to feel his displeasure. "Shall I not visit for these things, saith

the Lord?" But it is a gracious visit that the prophet seeks, which implies both manifestation and communion. Thus the Lord visited Israel in Egypt, and in Babylon. "After seventy years be accomplished, I will visit you, and perform my good word towards you, in causing you to return to this place." Exod. iii. 16. Jer. xxix. 10.——Of the Lord's visits to his people, it may be observed,

(1.) They are promised, and he will fulfil his word. Thus it was with respect to that long-expected and much desired one, at the incarnation of Christ; "whereby the day-spring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet in the way of peace." It was "in remembrance of his mercy, as he spake to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seed for ever." (Luke i. 54, 55. 78, 79.) The same may be said of all his visits to his people: they are not casual, but determined. And as they are at a fixed time on God's part, so they are most seasonable on ours: they are made when we most need them, and when he shall be most glorified by them. There is a "set time to favour Zion," and a set time to favour us. There is a time when God visits his people, and when he refrains from visiting; and these times are in his own power. His love first exists in purpose: it is then manifested in promises, and last of all in performance.

(2.) They are free and voluntary, and on our part wholly undeserved: they are what we seek, but cannot claim. If the Lord visits us in answer to prayer, it is not of debt, but of grace. His love does not find us lovely, but makes us so; and our fitness to receive his mercy is owing to our having obtained it. Our state as sinners is compared to that of a poor unpitied orphan, on whom a stranger had compassion as he passed by, and afterwards adopted and adorned. "Thou wast cast out in the open field, to the loathing of thy person, in the day that thou wast born. And

when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee, when thou wast in thy blood, Live; yea, I said unto thee, when thou wast in thy blood, Live. Thou becamest mine, and I clothed thee with broidered work, and girded thee about with fine linen, and covered thee with silk." (Ezek. xvi.) Christ's visit to Zaccheus also was unexpected and unsought. Curiosity, and not conscience, carried him up into the sycamore tree, from whence Christ bid him come down; and then, unasked and uninvited added, "To-day I must abide at thine house." When the Lord met with the woman of Samaria at Jacob's well, he was found of one who sought him not, and sought of one who asked not for him. His love brought him to the place, but she went only to draw water. And as it is in the first manifestation of mercy, so also in the visits which follow after: they often come when least expected, and but little desired. In many a dull and stupid frame, the believer is visited with mercy in a way that far exceeds all he could ask or think, and love breaks forth upon him like the sun from behind a cloud. "Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib." Cant. vi. 12.

(3.) Divine visits are often short and transient, like the sheet that was three times let down from heaven while Peter was praying upon the house-top, and almost immediately taken up again. Christ's visit to this world is expressed by his having dwelt in it: "The word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us." This was a long visit: but not so are his spiritual visits to his people. He sometimes shews his face; but before they can take a full view of his transcendant glory and beauty, the vision is withdrawn. "O the Hope of Israel, the Saviour thereof in time of trouble, why shouldst thou be as a stranger in the land, and as a wayfaring man that turneth aside to tarry for a night!" The manifestations of divine love are often

like a land-flood; sudden, overflowing, and soon spent; but the love itself is a boundless ocean, an ever-flowing stream. David's mountain stood strong; but God soon hid his face, and he was troubled. Paul was caught up to the third heavens, and knew not whether he was in the body or out of the body; but the thorn in the flesh soon convinced him where he was, and that his present comforts, however desirable, were not lasting. The various changes in the christian's experience, and the frequent succession of sorrow and darkness, doubts and fears, while they display the sovereignty of divine grace, are adapted to promote humility and watchfulness, and teach us the difference between heaven and earth. Were we always on the mount, with Peter, we might think it good to be here; but we must be made to know that to depart and be with Christ is far better. Young christians often form great expectations in this respect, and meet with great disappointments. At first setting out they think it is day, and never will be night; and afterwards are ready to cry out, It is night, and will never be day. "When God hideth his face, who then can behold him?"

(4.) However short the divine visits are, they are often repeated, and are peculiar to the favourites of heaven. They impart life to our graces, vigour to our services, and comfort to our souls. To them we owe all the benefit of ordinances, the savour of our spirits, and the usefulness of our lives. The Lord visited Solomon before he built the temple, and after its dedication; the one to prepare him for the undertaking, and the other to bless him in what he had done. Thus all our fitness for God's service, and all our success in it, depend upon the enjoyment of his presence. Moses was aware of this when leading the chosen tribes through the wilderness, and therefore he prayed, "If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence." It is true, God's appearances *for* us are more frequent

than his appearances *to* us: yet both would be more evident, if we were more watchful and observant. Christ was with Mary at the sepulchre, when she took him to be the gardener: he was also with his disciples on the sea when they were afraid, and took him to be a spirit. The promise is, "Lo, I am with you always: I will never leave you, nor forsake you." Heb. xiii. 5.

(*5.*) They are powerful and influential, always bringing peace and comfort to the soul. "It is the voice of my beloved," says the spouse in a rapture. His returns were as delightful as his departures had been distressing. The latter caused an agony of grief: "I sought him, but I found him not:" but the former produced an extasy of joy. These visits of love, while they are cheering to the people of God, are intimidating to their enemies. The beasts of prey rove about in the night, but retire to their dens and thickets when the morning dawns. The soul is invulnerable to temptations and dangers when God is with us, and we are armed on the right hand and on the left. These visits of love tend also to kindle desire, and endear the Saviour. "Did not our hearts burn within us," said the two disciples, "whilst he talked with us by the way, and opened unto us the scriptures?" They quicken us to holy duties, and fill the soul with humble joy. "The Lord God is my strength," says the prophet: "He maketh my feet like hind's feet. My soul shall make her boast in God," says the psalmist: "I will go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy." It was the divine presence that supported Paul in the midst of his persecutors, when no man stood by him; and this it is that will arm us against the fears of death. The christian, with the Saviour in his arms, may say as good old Simeon did, "Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace!" By the presence of God the valley of the shadow of death becomes lightsome, and a safe and delightful passage to the heavenly Canaan. (Psal. xxiii. 4.) Well then

might Jeremiah say, and well may each of us say, "Remember me, O Lord, and visit me."

II. Offer a few concluding remarks.

1. Though God hath promised his presence with his people, yet he may for a time withhold the manifestation of it. There may be a change in his countenance, as Jacob observed concerning Laban, though there is none in his heart. Many have mourned his departures as well as ourselves. "I go forward," says Job, "but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him; on the left hand where he doth work, but I cannot behold him; he hideth himself on the right hand that I cannot see him." The church also in captivity is full of tears and lamentation for the same reason. "Mine eye, mine eye runneth down with water, because the Comforter that should relieve my soul is far from me." (Job xxiii. 8, 9. Lam. i. 16.) Such departures are very distressing, though but temporary, and those who have been most indulged with the divine presence are most affected with its withdrawment; while those who have never experienced the former are insensible and unconcerned about the latter.

2. When God forbears his visits, his people are apt to think that he has forgotten them. They know that they deserve to be rejected, and fear that they are so. This arises from misapprehension of the divine conduct, impatience and unbelief. They judge of things by outward appearance, and suppose that they are out of God's mind because he is too much out of theirs. Hence it is that we hear such complaints as the following: "I am forgotten as a dead man out of mind: I am like a broken vessel—Lord, why castest thou off my soul; why hidest thou thy face from me? I am afflicted, and ready to die, from my youth up: while I suffer thy terrors I am distracted." Psal. xxxi. 12. lxxxviii. 14, 15.

3. To be remembered and visited of God is a blessing infinitely to be desired, and those especially who fear they are forgotten by him feel it to be so. If others should remember and visit them ever so often, yet this will not suffice. The loss of the divine presence is such as cannot be compensated by the presence and friendship of any other: even millions of angels cannot supply the place of an absent God. When he promised to send an angel to guide and guard the children of Israel through the wilderness, Moses said, "If thy presence go not with us, carry us not up hence!" No one but God himself can meet the wants and wishes of his people, and his presence is more to them than all creation put together. "In thy favour is life, and thy loving-kindness is better than life—Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none on earth that I desire besides thee?" Psal. lxxiii. 25.

4. Those who desire God's presence must seek it by earnest prayer. "Remember me, and visit me," was the language of Jeremiah, and will be that of every good man. Many are saying, Who will shew us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us! Earth would be hell, and heaven itself no heaven without thee! "What do I here," said Absalom in Geshur, "unless I see the king's face?" What do I here, says the christian, in the house of God, and at his table, without the presence of my Lord? I cannot enjoy myself, my friends, my children, my estate, nor means, nor ordinances, unless I enjoy God. In this all my desires meet; here all my hapiness is found. "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God!" Psal. xlii. 2.

SERMON V.

JOHN iii. 7.

Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.

No subject in religion is of greater importance than that of the new birth, and yet no one has been more misunderstood. Some have supposed that we are regenerated by baptism, made children of God, and heirs of the kingdom of heaven: but baptism is "not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God." Sin lies too deep to be thus removed, and can only be put away by the sacrifice of Christ. A person may be baptised in infancy or in riper years, and yet, like Simon Magus, remain in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity, and know no more of the new birth than those did of the Holy Spirit who had not so much as heard whether there was one. A change of moral conduct, especially if attended with some light in the understanding and warmth of affection, has also been mistaken for the new birth: but it is possible for a person to become "another man," like Saul, and yet not be a new man. Ahab humbled himself, and yet was not truly humble; and Jehu drove on furiously, but not towards heaven. A man may perform a multitude of duties, and yet have an unholy heart; be honest and fair in his dealings, and yet be an enemy to God. He may be of a generous, and yet not of a gracious disposition: may go through the round of all religion, and

yet have no religion. He may be able to say, with the young ruler, "All these things have I kept from my youth up," and yet want the one thing needful.

Let us then inquire into the nature of the change intended in our text—notice some of its evidences—and consider its necessity.

I. Inquire what it is to be born again.

In general, it is that change in which sinners, dead in trespasses and sins, are made alive to God. He who was once darkness is now made light in the Lord, and he who was a child of wrath now becomes a child of God, and heir of the kingdom of heaven. It is a change which brings him into a new world, a new state of existence, and gives him a new capacity for action. The temper of the heart is renewed, as well as the outward conduct; a spiritual and vital influence is felt, and a spiritual and vital principle imparted. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new:" 2 Cor. v. 17. More particularly,

1. It is a divine and supernatural change, effected by the agency of the Holy Spirit. When out of stones, as it were, children are raised up to Abraham, we may well say, This is the finger of God. He who gave man his being at first, can alone create him in Christ Jesus unto good works. Ministers may be the instruments, but God is the agent. He alone can enstamp his own image, and make us partakers of a divine nature. He every where assumes this work to himself, and all who are born again ascribe it to him. "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth—who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God—He that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God—You hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins—God, who commanded the light to shine out of dark-

ness, hath shined in our hearts." In the spiritual as well as in the natural world, it is He that brings to the birth, and gives strength to bring forth. To give life to the dead, and to bring a clean thing out of an unclean, is the work of omnipotence, and the effect of sovereign grace. John i. 13. 2 Cor. iv. 6. v. 5. Ephes. ii. 1. James i. 18.

2. It is an instantaneous change; and herein it differs from sanctification, which is a progressive work. The former is "a passing from death unto life:" the latter a "changing from glory to glory:" and both are by the Spirit of God. He who took up six days in creating a world, performs this work in an instant. He says, Let there be light, and there is light: Let there be life, and there is life! When men undertake a curious piece of workmanship, they require much time to bring it to perfection: but it is not so with the Lord. He needs no previous preparation, nor is he circumscribed in his actions: He is wonderful in counsel, and mighty in working. The temple at Jerusalem was forty-six years in building; but the spiritual temple is built at once. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, God can transform Saul the persecutor into Paul the preacher, and make the chief of sinners the most eminent saint. The operations of the Holy Spirit in this wonderful work are compared to the wind which bloweth where it listeth: its effects are secret and powerful, yet sudden and surprising. John iii. 8.

3. It is an internal and invisible change, yet may be known by its effects. "Ye are dead, and *your life is hid* with Christ in God;" yet it is not fictitious, but a real life: it is "truth in the inward parts," the life of God in the soul of man. It is thus expressed by the prophet; "A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you and cause ye to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep

my judgments and do them." (Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27.) Regeneration cleanses the corrupt fountain of the heart, and demolishes the strong-holds of Satan. It is a change from internal wickedness to internal goodness, from lukewarmness to zeal, from enmity to love, and from the image of Satan to the image of the living God.

4. The change is universal, extending to the heart and life. Universal beauty spread over the whole man, and universal rectitude influenced all his powers, and ran through all his actions, at the first creation: and in regeneration, the new man is said to be "created after God, in righteousness and true holiness." Not only the mind, but the man is renewed: "old things are passed away, and all things are become new." There are not only new thoughts and desires, hopes and fears, aversions and inclinations; but also a new conversation and course of action. The former is expressed in scripture by "newness of spirit," and the latter by "newness of life." The tree is made good, and its fruit is good. The soul is beautified with salvation, and its glory is seen. The flesh is crucified, with its affections and lusts, and the spirit is renewed and sanctified: the old man is put off, and the new man put on. The dark understanding is enlightened, the obstinate will subdued, and carnal affections are mortified. "Sin no longer reigns in their mortal bodies, that they should obey it in the lusts thereof; neither do they yield their members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin; but yield themselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and their members as instruments of righteousness unto God." Had they a thousand hearts, they would yield them all to him; or a thousand necks, they would bow them all in subjection to his authority. They take for their motto the words of Paul: "Whose am I, and whom I serve." Acts xxvii. 23. Rom. vi. 12, 13.

5. It is an abiding change. The saints are begotten

by an immortal Father, born of incorruptible seed, and designed for a life that shall never end. The grace of God in them is a well of water springing up to everlasting life, a spark of fire that shall never be extinguished. Unconverted men may have their good moods and religious pangs, but they are not lasting. "Oh Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? For your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away. But "the path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day." Those who are brought into a state of grace may fall into sin, reproach, and trouble; but they shall not return to a state of nature. If they leave their first love, they shall not lose it. God will neither destroy his own work, nor suffer others to destroy it. "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me: thy mercy, O Lord, endureth for ever: forsake not the work of thine own hands." Grace is not indefectable in its own nature, but it is rendered so by the purpose and promise of God. Psal. cxxxviii. 8. Prov. iv. 18. Rom. xi. 29. Phil. i. 6.

II. Notice some of the evidences of the new birth. —These we shall chiefly select from the first epistle of John.

1. Those who are born of God "do not commit sin; *yea*, they cannot sin, because they are born of God." (iii. 9. v. 18.) This however is not to be understood in the most extensive sense; for "there is not a just man upon earth that doeth good, and sinneth not;" and "if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." (Eccles. vii. 20. 1 John i. 8.) Those who plead for sinless perfection in the present life shew their unacquaintedness with scripture and their own hearts. Yet those who are born of God do not commit sin as others do; con-

tentedly, obstinately, and perseveringly, nor as they themselves once did. Sin has not the dominion over them, nor has it gained their full consent: it dwells in them, but does not rule over them. It is the object of their hatred, even while they commit it; and when committed, it is the matter of their grief. There is something within them which opposes the temptation, though there is something which complies with it. If they fail in the contest, they are recovered, and the contest is again renewed. The principle of grace will be always rising up against sin, and at length will triumph over it. Rom. vii. 14—25.

2. They have "overcome the world"—its frowns and smiles, hopes, and fears. (1 John v. 4.) Neither prosperity nor adversity, preferment nor abasement, can drive the believer from his duty, nor draw away his heart from God. The world is not the object of his pursuit, nor, as far as he acts in character, has he any anxious or disquieting cares about it. He neither inordinately thirsts after it, nor is much concerned to part with it. He has learned to weep, as though he wept not; to rejoice, as though he rejoiced not; to buy, as though he possessed not; and to use this world as not abusing it, knowing that the fashion of it passeth away. His language is in a good degree like that of Paul: "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." 1 Cor. vii. 30, 31. Gal. vi. 14.

3. They have a sincere love to all the saints; for "every one that loveth is born of God." (1 John iv. 7.) The existence of holy love is the effect of the new birth, and its various exercises are the evidence of it. True believers love God, and all mankind: they also love one another for his sake, and this shews that they are born of God and made partakers of a divine nature. There may be some difference of sentiment among christians, in lesser matters; and some of them

are less amiable than others; yet it belongs to their character to love as brethren, to be kind and tender hearted one towards another, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven them. And when those are highest in our esteem, however low in circumstances, who most adorn their profession and bring most honour to religion, it is a happy evidence that we are passed from death unto life, and shall never come into condemnation.

4. All their hope of salvation is founded on the mediation of Christ. "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God. (1 John v. 1.) Believing Jesus to be the Christ, however, includes not only a knowlege of him as the Saviour, and an admission of him under that character, but an actual reliance on him as such, and a committing of our souls into his hands. We cannot indeed believe aright concerning him, but we shall also trust in him; and this is proper to the soul that is born of God. No sooner does the light shine into it than it discovers its lost and perishing condition, its utter inability to help itself, and the insufficiency of all creatures to afford relief. At the same time Christ is revealed as a suitable and all-sufficient Saviour, and the soul is brought to an absolute resignation of itself to him; to be sanctified by his grace, directed by his Spirit, and pardoned through his blood. Christ lives and reigns in the new creation. In every emergency, danger and distress, the soul applies to him and finds safety. Its language is, "Lord, to whom should we go? thou hast the words of eternal life."

5. Their walk and conversation is holy and exemplary. "Every one that doeth righteousness is born of God." (1 John ii. 29.) This is not merely to do the thing which is right in itself, but out of regard to the rectitude and propriety of it, or from the love of righteousness for its own sake. True obedience also respects not only what God has commanded, but because he

has commanded it. What we do must not be to gratify our inclination, promote our own interest, or please either the good or the great, but in obedience to the will of God. To be acceptable it must likewise be universal and persevering; not from mercenary, but grateful motives; not for life, but from life; not that God may love, but because he hath loved us. As no one doth righteousness without a righteous principle, so neither without renouncing all our own righteousness in respect of dependence: for that righteousness which does not submit to the righteousness of God must be the greatest instance of unrighteousness, assuming to itself that which does not belong to it, and denying both to the Creator and Redeemer that to which they have the mot equitable claim, robbing one of his glory, and the other of his crown.

III. Consider the reasonableness and importance of this change: "Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again."

Nicodemus seemed to marvel at this doctrine, as if it were liable to great objections; supposing it to be new and strange, and altogether impracticable and absurd. "How can these things be?" said he. "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?" Thus ignorant was this master in Israel of one of the first principles of the oracles of God! Let us also beware that we do not stumble at this stumbling stone. We *must* be born again.

1. Do not marvel at it as if the doctrine were new and strange. Or if it had been so, yet seeing that Christ himself expressly declares it, and urges its importance, it becomes us to receive it. But if we search the Old Testament, we shall find that the doctrine of the new birth is no new revelation, though expressed in somewhat different terms. What is here

called a being "born again" is there denoted by "circumcising the heart to love the Lord our God"—"taking away the heart of stone, and giving a heart of flesh"—"giving them a heart to know the Lord"—"putting his fear in their heart," &c. These and many other similar terms were fully expressive of the renovation of the soul by divine grace, and contained the same doctrine for substance as that which our Lord inculcated. He might therefore well say to Nicodemus, "Art thou a master in Israel, and knowest not these things!" Had he been an Israelite indeed, he would have known these things; and being himself a teacher, his ignorance was still more inexcusable.

2. Marvel not as if the doctrine were unintelligible. Mysterious it may be, as to the manner in which this change is effected, but its nature and necessity are plain and obvious. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and we hear the sound thereof, but cannot tell whence it cometh, or whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." We see and feel the effect, but know not the cause: so is it respecting divine influence. The formation of Christ in the heart may be as difficult to comprehend, as the formation of a child in the womb: but the fact itself is as easy of belief in one case as in the other. "As thou knowest not what is the way of the spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child; even so thou knowest not the works of God, who maketh all." (Eccles. xi. 5.) Great is the mystery of godliness, as well as of iniquity. But though mysterious, yet it is highly rational; and though not fully known, yet so much of it may be understood as to justify and demand our belief. Whatever difficulties may arise in our mind, or objections be made by others, yet "if any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God." The meek will he guide in judgment, and the meek will he teach his way. If there be any thing perverse or perplexing, it is in

us, and not in the scriptures. "All the words of my mouth are in righteousness: there is nothing froward or perverse in them. They are all plain to him that understandeth, and right to them that find knowledge." Prov. viii. 8, 9.

3. Do not consider this new birth to be impossible. With men, and with angels, it may be so; but not with God. Nothing is too hard for omnipotence. He who created man at first can new create him; and he who raised dead bodies can quicken dead souls. Though the Ethiopian cannot change his skin, nor the leopard his spots, yet God can change them. There are no habits so rooted, but he can alter them; no corruptions so strong and prevalent, but he can mortify them; no difficulties so great, but he can surmount them; and no disease so inveterate, but he can cure it. Let the awakened sinner remember that his help is in Him who made heaven and earth, and whose grace is all-sufficient. "Son of man," saith the Lord, "can these bones live?" To which he answered, "O Lord God, thou knowest." The prophet might despair of it: but thus saith the Lord unto these bones, "Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live." This is the Lord's doing, and marvellous in our eyes. Great are thy works, and thy thoughts are very deep! But "if it be marvellous in our eyes, should it also be marvellous in mine eyes, saith the Lord of hosts?" Ezek. xxxvii. 3, 5. Zech. viii. 6.

4. Marvel not at this change as if it were unnecessary. "Ye *must* be born again." Whatever may be your mental attainments or moral qualities, yet something is still wanting, and which God only can supply. The grosser pollutions may have been escaped, and various duties performed; and yet after all you may still be dead in trespasses and sins, and walking according to the course of this world. "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." While the heart is unsanctified, and our nature unrenewed, we can

have no meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light, nor capacity for its enjoyment. "They that are in the flesh cannot please God:" their nature is corrupt, the principle of action is depraved, and their sacrifice is an abomination in his sight. The soul must be prepared for heaven, as well as heaven be prepared for it. Heaven is a place of perfect purity, and nothing that is defiled can enter there. God gives grace, and then glory; and the one to prepare for the other. Christ's loving his church, giving himself for it, and then sanctifying and cleansing it, is in order that he may at last "present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." Ephes. v. 24—27.

Conclusion,

(1.) What has been said upon the subject may convince us of the evil of sin, and its baneful effects upon mankind. None have escaped the pollutions of it; and, without a thorough change of heart, none can escape its awful consequences. "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;" and must for ever come short of it, unless the evil be removed.

(2.) Let us not rest satisfied in any thing less than this entire renovation. 'We hope to be saved,' is the language of every one: but you cannot be saved, except you be born again. Then what meanest thou, O sleeper! Arise and call upon thy God! Pray for the teachings and influences of his Spirit, to shew thee the way of life, and to guide thee in it. Pray that he would wound thee deeply, and heal thee thoroughly. Rest in nothing short of being begotten again to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Christ from the dead; and by thine own resurrection from the death of sin, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. 1 Peter i. 3.

(3.) The less marvellous it is that we must be born again, the more surprising it is that we should be

less about it. O! that I had an eye to weep, and art to bleed over the miserable, the awful state of nverted sinners, and a voice like thunder to warn n of their danger! Great God, stir up thyself, and us up, that we may come to Christ, live to Christ, in Christ, and be happy for ever! Amen.

"Not all the outward forms on earth,
Nor rites that God has given,
Nor will of man, nor blood, nor birth
Can raise a soul to heaven.

The sovereign will of God alone
Creates us heirs of grace;
Born in the image of his Son,
A new peculiar race.

Our quicken'd souls awake, and rise
From the long sleep of death;
On heavenly things we fix our eyes,
And praise employs our breath."

SERMON VI.

PSALM cxlviii. 14.

A people near unto him: praise ye the Lord.

GLORIOUS things are spoken of Zion, the city of God. Glorious promises are made, glorious privileges are given, and glorious titles ascribed to her. Israel is called God's Hephzibah, his crown and diadem, his jewels, his portion and peculiar treasure. Yet nothing can be said of them more for their honour and comfort, than what is said in our text: "A people near unto him." While in an unregenerate state they were so base and miserable that they did not deserve even the name of a people: they were no better than a multitude of dry bones or dead carcases spread abroad in the valley: but now they are in the highest sense of the word, "a people." "In time past they were not a people, but are now the people of God: they had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy." (1 Pet. ii. 10.) Their being called a people may also denote their number and their union. Comparatively they are few, but collectively they are many. They are separated from the rest of the world, but united among themselves, so as to form a distinct body. They have one heart and one way, one Lord and one faith. Being under a wise and holy government, they are not a disorderly banditti, but form a regular and harmonious society, seeking each other's welfare, and speaking peace to all their seed. It may also be said

f them, as of Israel of old, "The people shall dwell lone, and shall not be numbered among the nations." ;od hath distinguished them by his grace, and they istinguish themselves by their zeal and activity in his ervice. The world indeed may look upon them with ontempt, and regard them only as "the common eople," as they did the disciples; as people of the ower order, and of the baser sort; and it may be true iat they are generally poor and afflicted people: but ieir outward meanness is more than compensated by ieir spiritual privileges—for they are a people near nto God.

The words of the text may immediately refer to the ewish nation, as God's peculiar people; but as they e applicable to true believers in all ages, we shall onsider them in that view; and shall inquire—what implied in this nearness—and why it is matter of joy.

I. In what respects are true believers near to God.

As creatures, "God is not far from every one of us; r in him we live, and move, and have our being." it as sinners, he is far from us, and we are far from m. Sin has created an awful distance between God d us: he has left our world as a desolate heritage, d beholds its sinful inhabitants afar off. They also e alienated from him, through the ignorance that is in em, by reason of the hardness of their hearts. The iguage of sinners is concerning him, "Depart from , for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways;" it all his people are near unto him. That is,

1. The awful breach is healed, and they are recon-ed. The separating wall of sin is broken down, and ey have boldness and access with confidence to him, ho would otherwise be a consuming fire. This was presented by the rending of the vail, at the death of hrist. The way into the holy of holies is now laid en. Christ entered by his own blood, and we enter

in the same way. All enmities were slain by him upon the cross; the enmity between man and man, between Jews and Gentiles, who for many ages had been at the greatest variance, and the enmity between man and God. A holy God ever was and will be the enemy of sin: it is that which his soul hateth: but he is well pleased with the sinner who believes in Jesus, and returns unto God by him. All occasion of distance and dislike is now removed, and there is now no condemnation: but in Christ Jesus, those who sometimes were far off, are made nigh by the blood of the cross. All the saints were virtually in Christ when he was brought near, and seated on the right hand of God; and when he was accepted, they were accepted in him. God is well pleased for his righteousness sake, justice is satisfied, the law magnified, wrath appeased, mercy exalted, and the sinner saved. "I will be a Father unto them, and they shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. Gracious promise! Blessed people to whom it is fulfilled! 2 Cor. vi. 18.

2. The power of sin is subdued, and they are near as to union and likeness. The pardon of sin removes that which hindered our approach to God, and the renewing of the mind draws us to seek after him. Nearness, as to the former, is by the blood of Christ: the latter is by the influences of the Holy Spirit. It is he who subdues our stubborn wills, collects and fixes our scattered affections, reduces our wanderings, and guides our feet into the way of peace. God approaches to us by his grace, before we approach to him in a way of duty. As sinners we are without Christ, and without God in the world; and if he were not to change the native disposition of our hearts, we should always continue so. It is sovereign grace that turns the obstinate traitor into an obedient subject, and the bitter enemy into a cordial friend. This it is that brings the prodigal from a far country to his father's feet, and prevents his returning back again. The soul

when brought near, will be kept near. If others depart, and tempt them to do so too, their language is, "Lord, to whom should we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life—Whom have I in heaven but thee; and there is none on earth that I desire besides thee—Tell me, Oh thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon: for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions?" *John* vi. 68. Psalm lxxiii. 25. Cant. i. 7.

3. They are near as to communion and fellowship. It is said of Mordecai that he was next unto king Ahasuerus, in dignity and honour, enjoying the most familiar intercourse. It is also the peculiar prerogative of Christ the Mediator to be near unto God, and to sit down with him on his throne; and the fellowship between the Father and the Son is such that they are one, and that in a higher sense than can possibly be said of any creature, however highly exalted, or honoured by the divine favour. Yet the saints are a people near unto him, not only as being the objects of his love, but as enjoying his presence, and having the most delightful assurance of his favour and regard. Individually considered, some are more highly favoured in this respect than others; but in a greater or less degree, this is the blessedness of all his people. The divine Father may sometimes turn away his face, but at others it is turned towards them. Though he often frowns, he will sometimes smile; and though he causeth grief, yet will he have compassion. "O Lord, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortest me." Jacob had his Bethel, David his hill Mizar, and Paul, though sometimes pressed out of measure, had also his raptures in the third heavens. Isai. xii. 1.

4. They are near to him in a way of endearment, being precious in his sight. Joseph would have Jacob to dwell in Goshen that he might be near to him, be-

cause he loved him and delighted in him. Intimate friends wish to be near each other, to receive and impart their mutual kindnesses. How near and dear the Lord's people are to him, may be seen by the tender names by which he calls them. They are his children, the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty: Ephraim is his dear son, and Israel his first-born. By the manner in which he feels for them in their troubles. In all their afflictions he is afflicted; and like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. If they be afflicted, and mourn, his bowels are troubled for them; and though he sometimes speaks against them, yet he earnestly remembers them still. He will not always chide, neither will he be always wroth, lest the spirit should fail before him, and the souls which he hath made. He thinks nothing too good to bestow upon them; but in blessings he will bless them indeed. Their portion shall not consist of earthly things: they are like Isaac, the son of promise, and shall have the blessings of grace and glory. Yea, he will give his Son to die for them, his spirit to sanctify them, and himself as their eternal portion. They are dearer to him than all the world besides, and it is for their sake that the world is spared, as he would have spared Sodom for the sake of ten righteous. They are his jewels, and he will preserve them; yea, he will spare them as a man spareth his son that serveth him. "The Lord's portion is his people: Jacob is the lot of his inheritance." They are near to his heart, and to his eye, and his ear is open to their complaints. "Blessed are the people that are in such a case; yea, blessed are the people whose God is the Lord!"

5. They are so near to him that they will soon be with him. Like the weary pilgrim, they are near home, and will shortly be at rest. Faith brings God and the soul together, and carries on a sweet and holy intercourse on earth; yet while we are present in the body, we are absent from the Lord. Enoch walked

with God, as with his best friend; but the communion here is liable to many interruptions. If we follow the Lord, like Peter, it is at best but afar off. Death only can complete our nearness, and every day and hour we are drawing nearer and nearer to God. It is but a little while, and all our fears and sorrows, distance and desertions will be at an end. The night is far spent, and the day is at hand. It begins to dawn, and the day-star of eternal glory will soon rise in our hearts. Lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh. Behold, O ye saints, I bring you tidings of great joy! It will be but a little while, and you shall for ever solace yourselves in the light of God's countenance, and lay your weary heads on the bosom of Jesus. Well may you rejoice, as Jacob did when he saw the waggons which were to carry him to his son Joseph. Faith gives you an interest in the divine favour, and death will bring you to the full enjoyment of it. Your warfare shall be accomplished, and the victory complete. You shall no more see through a glass darkly, but face to face; shall see as you are seen, and know as you are known.

II. Consider the reasons why this nearness is matter of exultation and joy—"A people near unto him: praise ye the Lord."

1. This nearness is lasting: those who are thus brought near to God shall be for ever near. A seeming distance there may be, but it is only a temporary one: a real and eternal distance there cannot be. Their union with Christ is indissoluble, and his love to them is everlasting. The tokens of it may be suspended, but the love itself will never be extinguished. If their iniquities separate between them and God, it shall only be till they are repented of and pardoned. If he contend with them, it will not be for ever; and if he hide his face, it shall only be for a moment, that

he may return to them in loving kindness and in mercy. "Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Rom. viii. 38, 39.

2. Those who are near to God have God also near to them. Is danger near? Are enemies near? Are troubles near? Is death near? God also is near! He will guide, protect, and comfort his people amidst all their difficulties and dangers. "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them—As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people, from henceforth even for ever—The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth." If the believer be forsaken by his friends, and left alone, he may say with his Lord and Master, "I am not alone; for the Father is with me." Let those therefore, who are in such a case, praise the Lord. "For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon him for?" Deut. iv. 7. Psal. xxxiv. 7. cxxv. 2. cxlviii. 18.

3. They have blessings and privileges which none else can enjoy. They may hear from him, and he from them; may contemplate his glorious Majesty, and commune with him as it were face to face. Thus Moses saw him who was invisible. Elijah also came near and said, "O Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel." Such as are near to God have the most blessed opportunity of knowing his mind and will: the secret of the Lord is with them, and he will shew them his covenant.

4. Being near to God, they are also near to heaven. Those who come to him are come within sight of it;

yea, have already entered into the suburbs of heaven. "Ye are come (saith the apostle) to mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven; and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant." The presence of God on earth is heaven begun, and the full enjoyment of it hereafter will be heaven complete. Heb. xii. 22—24.

IMPROVEMENT.

(1.) How vain are all our hopes of happiness without God! While far from him, evil is near to us, and we are near to the greatest of all evils—hell and eternal destruction. "They that are far from thee shall perish." Psal. lxxiii. 27.

(2.) Let us be reconciled to those providences which tend to bring us near. The severest trials are often among the means which God employs to bring us to himself; and had it not been for them we might still have been afar off, and without hope. Nor are we likely to be kept near without a similar discipline. Afflictions make us feel our need of mercy, and lead us to seek it. How often, when the christian has departed from God, is he brought back by means of the rod! He restoreth our souls, and leadeth us in the paths of righteousness, for his name sake.

(3.) Let nearness to God be the object sought after in every holy duty, both public and private. Rest not satisfied in acts of worship, but labour to get near to God in them; all else will be unprofitable and vain. We may as well be in Geshur as at Jerusalem, unless we see the king's face.

(4.) Not only let us desire to be brought near in a way of interest, but to keep near in a way of communion. Let our hearts be sacred to the Lord, and neither suffer the world nor sin to have any place there.

Continued nearness to him will be our greatest honour and happiness: it will soften afflictions, heighten our mercies, fortify us against the fear of death, and be our best preparative for heaven.

(5.) If the Lord's people be near and dear to him, let them be so to us. Consider them as objects of his love, and learn to love them for his sake. How kind and affectionate ought we to be towards those who are thus precious in his sight! By this also we shall know that we are passed from death to life, because we love the brethren.

For thee, my God, may my whole soul,
  Bound by a thousand ties,
Be firmly fix'd, and day by day
  To greater nearness rise.

Begone, vain world, with all thy charms,
  Nor more disturb my peace;
Ye inward lusts, infernal powers,
  Your fruitless efforts cease.

Fly swiftly hence, ye joys of sense,
  Let every sin depart;
The God of heaven asserts his claim,
  And grace commands my heart.

SERMON VII.

JER. xvii. 17.

Be not a terror unto me: thou art my hope in the day of evil.

EVERY believer can adopt the former of these expressions, but not the latter. In the one, the prophet deprecates God's wrath; in the other, he declares his confidence in the divine mercy. It was an evil time in which he lived, a time of great calamity, when his country was ripe for ruin and going into captivity. He warned them of the danger; but they hated him for it, and put him into the dungeon. Under these persecutions, he appeals to God, and implores his protection. "Behold, they say unto me, Where is the word of the Lord? Let it come now. As for me, I have not hastened from being a pastor to follow thee; neither have I desired the woeful day, thou knowest: that which came out of my lips was right before thee. Be not a terror unto me: thou art my hope in the day of evil."

This prayer was peculiarly suitable at such a time; and as there are many days of evil to which we also are exposed, it is suitable for us.—Let us consider what is implied in the petition—and in the confidence which is here expressed.

I. In the petition, the prophet deprecates divine wrath: "Be not a terror unto me."

1. We may observe, that the awful majesty of God is in itself an object of fear and dread. He is indeed the exceeding great joy of his people, and their supreme delight; yet when they consider his infinite understanding and unbounded power, in connection with inflexible justice and righteousness, as of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and who will by no means clear the guilty, he is also the object of their fear and dread. Moses loved the Lord God of Israel, and was indulged with such intimate communion that he spake with him face to face; yet when at Sinai he saw the lightnings flash, heard the thunders roar, and perceived the mountain tremble under the weight of a descending God, "so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake." And when Isaiah saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, his train filling the temple, and the seraphims crying one to another, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory,—he said, "Woe is me, for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!" Habakkuk could rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of his salvation, and that even in the absence of all-created good; and yet the awful displays of divine majesty, and the threatened vengeance to his enemies, quite overwhelmed him. "When I heard (says he) my belly trembled; my lips quivered at the voice: rottenness entered into my bones, and I trembled in myself." Even the mercy of God is awful; for "they shall fear the Lord and his goodness:" how much more his greatness! The nearer our views of the Divine Being, the more awful and impressive will they be. Yet it becomes us not entertain a slavish fear of him, or that which hath torment; but to mix our reverence with faith and love, and to adore as well as fear. "Be not a terror unto me, O Lord." Heb. xii. 21. Isai. vi. 5. Hab. iii. 16. Hos. iii. 5.

2. Divine chastisements are also to be feared. The prophet does not pray to be wholly exempt from chastisement, but that God would not deal with him so as to be a terror to him. "O Lord, (says he) correct me, but with judgment; not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing." Thus David prayed: "O Lord, rebuke me not in thine anger: neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure." Also Job: "Let him take his rod away from me, and let not his fear terrify me—Withdraw thine hand far from me, and let not thy dread make me afraid." In the present state, afflictions are useful and necessary; and God has declared, that if his people forsake his law, he will visit their iniquities with stripes, and their transgressions with a rod; and that whom he loveth he chasteneth, and rebuketh every son whom he receiveth. It does not therefore become us to pray absolutely against affliction: that would be to deprecate some of the special instances of love and mercy, for which we might have reason to be thankful all our days: but to desire that all our trials may be so mixed with mercy, as that God may not be a terror to us in the day of evil, is right and proper. Many have had to say with David, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted;" and with Joseph, "The Lord hath made me fruitful in the land of mine affliction." The cross is the way to the crown; but while we bear the cross, it is good to have a sight of the crown. While afflictions lie heavily upon us, we may pray to have them lightened, to have the curse removed, and the bitter ingredients mingled with love, so that all may be salutary and medicinal, purging away our corruptions, purifying our hearts, and perfecting our graces. If the Lord's hand presseth us sore, let us seek that the everlasting arms may be underneath us; that if he take the rod in one hand to correct, he may also take the staff in the other to support. We can bear the frowns of a father, but not the strokes of an enemy. We might rejoice in the deepest troubles

that can befal us on earth, under a sense of the love of God; but should be miserable even in heaven itself amidst the tokens of his displeasure. Jer. x. 24. Psal. vi. 1. Job ix. 34.

3. The wrath of God is still more dreadful, and therefore most of all to be feared. This is the greatest of all evils. This it was that overwhelmed Sodom and Gomorrah, and brought destruction upon the world of the ungodly: a fire is kindled by it that burns to the lowest hell. This is the evil that threatens sinners, and this shall be the portion of their cup. If the wrath of a king be as the roaring of a lion, what must be that of an incensed God! "Who knoweth the power of thine anger! According to thy fear, so is thy wrath." Good men may dread this wrath, though they shall never feel it. "My flesh trembleth for fear of thee," says David; "and I am afraid of thy judgments." Those who have God for their Father, when under the tokens of his displeasure, may fear him as an avenger. It is right indeed that we should fear Him who hath power to destroy both body and soul in hell; but if it keep us in bondage, and discourage us from duty, it is the fear of a slave, and not that of a son. Reverence and godly fear will lead us to serve him, and to serve him acceptably; but that which has an opposite tendency is the effect of impenitence and unbelief. The fear that God approves is mixed with hope and confidence, and this appears in our text: "Be not a terror unto me: thou art my hope in the day of evil."

4. In deprecating wrath, the prophet in effect prays for support and comfort in the time of trial. "Will he plead against me with his great power?" says Job. No: "but he would put strength in me." There—at the mercy-seat, which is sprinkled with blood and encompassed with the rainbow of the covenant—"there the righteous might dispute with him; so should I be delivered for ever from my judge." Thus

Jeremiah might desire not only to be freed from a tormenting dread of the majesty and wrath of God, but to have free access, and enjoy delightful fellowship with him. This would be to him as the helmet of salvation in the day of evil. A lively hope in God, and communion with him, will preserve us amidst all our troubles, and nothing then can hurt us, come what will. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee—God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea." Job xxiii. 6, 7. Psal. xlvi. 1, 2. Isai. xxvi. 3.

II. Notice the confidence that is here expressed: "thou art my hope in the day of evil."

1. The grace exercised is that of hope. The prophet is "troubled on every side, yet not distressed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed." He foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself; trouble is coming, but his confidence is in God. Amidst all his fears he has strong faith, and a hope that maketh not ashamed. This is the anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, entering into that within the vail. It is by this also that we are saved. It is not only an evidence of salvation, but a principal means by which it is effected; for he that hath a good hope in him will purify himself even as God is pure. Some indeed have considered it as one of the lowest graces, as inferior to faith and love: but though it be the fruit of these, yet even these can rise no higher than a well-grounded and assured hope. Persons may have faith, and yet but little hope: they may be in a state of spiritual desertion and despondency: but where hope is, there will be both faith and love.—The object of hope is some

distant good, either real or supposed; for what is apprehended to be evil is not the object of hope, but of fear. It must also be a possible or attainable good; otherwise it will not excite hope, but despair. A good that is absent, or not fully enjoyed: for "hope that is seen is not hope; for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for it?" It is the well-grounded expectation of good things to come, not visible but invisible, not present but future.—The hope of the Christian is rational and scriptural. It is produced by the Holy Spirit, strengthened by experience, and grounded on the promises.—More particularly, observe,

(1.) God is the object of his people's hope: "Thou art my hope," says the prophet. There are many things which the christian hopes for, but they all centre in one object. The Holy Spirit is the author and preserver of this hope, Christ is the medium of it, as well as of every other grace, and God is the object of it. All is founded on the mediation of Christ, and all centres in the perfections, promises, and covenant of God. The soul's immediate rest is in the Redeemer: its ultimate rest is in God through him. "Thou art my hope, O Lord God: thou art my trust from my youth." And a testimony was established in Jacob, and a law in Israel, that they might set their hope in God, and not forget his works. Psal. lxxi. 5. lxxviii. 5.

(2.) God also is the end of their hope. Here it centres and terminates; it will not stop short of this, and further than this it cannot go. It is God that the christian hopes in, and God that he hopes for—some manifestations of his favour, some tokens of his love in this world, and the perfect enjoyment of him in the next. He hopes for heaven; and is it not heaven where God is? He hopes for salvation; and does not salvation consist in the fruition of God, and conformity to him? "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied when I awake with

thy likeness—In thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." Psal. xvii. 15. xvi. 11.

2. Observe the time when this hope was exercised: "in the day of evil." Sins and sorrows attend us every day, and hence every day is a day of evil: it is needful therefore that hope should be exercised every day. The Psalmist said, "I will hope continually, and will yet praise thee more and more." He also says, "Trust in him at all times, ye people: pour out your hearts before him: God is a refuge for us." If the days of our pilgrimage be few and evil, there is the more need to have them counterbalanced with the joy of hope, and that we should be looking forward to the time when we shall enter into rest. But besides the general troubles attendant on human life, there are peculiar days of evil which befal the church and the world, our families and persons individually: and it is of great importance to have God for our hope at such times especially. In old age the evil days will come, and the years draw nigh, in which we shall have to say we have no pleasure in them. Then, O how good to be able to adopt the words of the psalmist: "My flesh and my heart fail; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." That God may not be a terror to us in the day of affliction, or in the hour of death, let us make him our refuge, that he may be a hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest, and as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. Let us see to it that matters are right between God and our own souls, that there be no controversy between him and us; but that we cultivate an habitual dependance on him, and close communion with him; that when we come to the closing scene, the last and trying day, we may have to say with Paul, "I know in whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him until that day!" Psal. lxxiii. 26.

(1.) We may see from this subject how hopes a fears are often blended together in the experience the godly. Jeremiah had set his hope in God; prayed that he might not be a terror to him. It v his lot also to live in troublous times, and the prosp was dismaying to him: we need not wonder theref if weak believers often fear and tremble in similar c cumstances. Yet "the Lord taketh pleasure in th that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy." Ps cxlvii. 11.

(2.) If God be sometimes a terror even to his c people, how much more to the wicked! If the rig eous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and sinner appear? Think, O sinner, of the day of e and what thou wilt do in the end thereof! The clo which seem to hang over the heads of the righte will burst upon you, and the wrath that terrifies th will utterly destroy you. Even in this life, afflictions overwhelm thee, if God be not thy refuge; and in next he will be a terror unto thee, even a consum fire. "Thou shalt find no ease, neither shall the of thy foot have rest; but the Lord shall give th trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow mind; and thy life shall hang in doubt before th and thou shalt fear day and night, and shalt have n assurance of thy life." Deut. xxviii. 65—67.

SERMON VIII.

JOHN xiv. 30.

The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.

No one since the fall could ever say this. It only was and could be the language of him who was "holy, harmless, and undefiled, separate from sinners, made higher than the heavens." The time was short, the arduous and important work was nearly finished, and the most trying season of all was now approaching. The clouds are gathering, the enemy is collecting all his forces, and will shortly make a furious onset. But the Saviour is fully prepared, and confident of victory: the serpent may bruise his heel, but he will bruise the serpent's head, and fully destroy the works of the devil. "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me."

I. Satan is called "the prince of this world."

He is also called "the god of this world," to whom the greater part of mankind are in subjection, being led captive by him at his will. There may be different ranks and orders among the angels of darkness, as well as among the angels of light: but there appears to be one who is their ruler and their head, and who, if possible, is more hateful and injurious than the rest. In allusion to the god of Ekron he is called Beelzebub, and Apollyon, which signifies a destroyer. Rev. ix. 11. More particularly,

1. Satan is called *a prince*, which implies power and dominion. The sinner's heart is his palace, his strong hold. He has a numerous retinue of other spirits, artful and mischievous like himself, whom he takes with him and employs in the most dishonourable services. His statutes and ordinances, which are directly opposed to the holy law of God, and his armour of defence, are the lusts and corruptions of men. He assumes the state of a prince; has a dreadful voice, and a powerful arm. "He beholdeth all high things, and is king over all the children of pride."

2. He is the prince *of this world*, and has been so almost from the beginning. The fall of man established his authority, and by craft and violence he seeks to maintain it. "The whole world lieth in the wicked one: they are in subjects and slaves, slumbering in his snare, and under his dominion. Do we inquire how he came by this principality? It was by conquest. He won the crown before he wore it. He gained the victory over our first parents while in Eden; and having done this, has brought all their posterity into bondage. Wicked men also choose him for their ruler and governor. They serve him freely and by choice, yielding themselves servants to obey, and their members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin. They say to him in effect, as the trees did to the bramble, "Come thou and reign over us;" and fire will one day come out of this bramble, and consume the cedars of Lebanon. Judges ix. 14. Rom. vi. 16. 1 John v. 19.

Here let us inquire, whose subjects are we, and what master do we serve? If Jesus be not thy king, then Satan is. If thou art yet unconverted, serving divers lusts and pleasures, he is thy lord: and however pleasant his service may seem at present, it will issue in eternal disgrace and torment. But bless the Lord, O ye saints, who hath delivered you from the tyrannical power of this enemy, and translated you

nto the kingdom of his dear Son! Let this act of unnerited grace be ever remembered by you, and make im the most grateful returns. "God is the Lord vho giveth us light: bind the sacrifice with cords to he horns of the altar." Luke i. 74. Col. i. 13.

II. *The prince of this world cometh.*

The Saviour viewed his approach: he was near at hand. "When I was daily with you in the temple, (said he) ye stretched forth no hands against me: but this is your hour, and the power of darkness." Satan was now coming down with great wrath, knowing that he had but a short time. His coming implies,

1. That he had hitherto kept at a distance. When he had been foiled by our blessed Lord in the wilderness, he was so discouraged by this unexpected defeat, that it is said, "he departed for a season." Thus it is sometimes with believers: when the enemy finds them upon their guard, and apprehends that his attempts will be unsuccessful, he will withdraw for a time, till they are less watchful and more secure; and thus he gains more by withholding a temptation than by renewing it. And when the unclean spirit goeth out of a man, not being cast out by omnipotent grace, he only quits his possession for a time in order the more effectually to resume and maintain it. So the Israelites fled before the men of Ai, that they might bring them into a snare, and effect their destruction. Satan might think of adopting this policy after his first defeat, and therefore he would now come with fresh hopes of success.

2. He had some particular end in view, which he wished to accomplish. He does not act without design. This adversary, the devil, goeth about, seeking whom he may devour. Some malicious purpose or other is always brooding in his breast. He is always full of mischief; and happy is it for those who are not

ignorant of his devices. What he had now in vie was, if possible, to frustrate the gracious designs c God in the salvation of his people, though by attempt ing this he brought about their accomplishment. Th two great ends which Satan had in view were, to temp Christ, and to trouble him: the first in the wilderness and the last in the garden. In the former instance h came with the crafty wiles of the serpent: in the pre sent with the rage of the lion. Then he put on th disguise of a friend: now he appears as an open enemy He first tempted Judas to betray him, then stirre up the chief priests and rulers to accuse him, and lastl Pilate, in opposition to his own conscience, to condem him. Never did this infernal spirit shew his malic more than against the person of our blessed Redeemer He has an inveterate hatred to the members; but muc more to the head. He is thine enemy, O believer but he was a greater enemy to thy Lord?

3. His coming would be immediate, and withou delay. The prince of this world *cometh:* he is just a the door. God has let him loose for a little seasor and he will employ it for the worst of purposes Whatsoever his hand findeth him to do, he will do i with all his might. Whoever does not improve th present opportunity, he will, and will go to the lengt of his chain. If there be ever so small a gap in th hedge, he will break in at it. See the craft of the ad versary! The time of Christ's weakness is the tim of his most powerful exertions, and of his utmo cruelty. When God seemed to forsake his belove Son, and both Jews and Gentiles conspire against hin then it is that he is called to encounter principalities an powers, the rulers of the darkness of this world, an spiritual wickednesses in high places. When the win dows of heaven were opened, the fountains of th great deep were also broken up to overwhelm him and overwhelmed he must have been, had he not bee as mighty to suffer as he is to save.

May we not often say, as Christ did, "The prince of this world cometh?" He is frequently near to us when we think him at the greatest distance. He comes to us in the closet, in the house of God, and at his table he comes to us, as he did to our blessed Lord, when we are almost at our journey's end. But we have two things to comfort us, which no doubt were a comfort to him—The conflict, though sharp, will be but short: we shall soon be out of his reach, and he that now comes will come no more—And, if we resist, we shall certainly be victorious. It was foretold of the Saviour that he should not fail nor be discouraged; and this promise shall also be fulfilled to all his followers. Isai. xlii. 4.

III. The prince of this world cometh, *and hath nothing in me.*

The sinner cannot say this, neither can the saint until he get to heaven, Here the most spiritual and holy have something for Satan to work upon; a party within, that is ready to rise up in arms and open at the first signal to the enemy without. That which keeps Christ out of the heart is always ready to let Satan in; and though the former may have taken possession, yet the latter will be striving to regain it. Grace changes the nature of the sinner, but not the nature of sin. Those who are sanctified are sanctified but in part: though a gracious principle is implanted, yet the corrupt principle still remains: and where there is found some good thing towards the Lord God of Israel, there will also be found many evil things. Oh, let us be humbled under a sense of our depravity! We have all something in us that takes part with Satan against God. But it was not so with our blessed Saviour: "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me." He had no weak or unguarded part belonging to him; no sinful propensity, no guilt; nothing to

furnish the enemy with matter of accusation, and no corruption to give him advantage in his temptations. His sparks would not kindle, for there was no tinder: his fiery darts must retort as from a rock of adamant. He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. The unspotted purity of Christ's nature was owing to the following things, all of which were peculiar to himself—

1. His miraculous conception. He was born, but not begotten; made of a woman, and made flesh, but not in the ordinary way. He partook of our nature, and became man, but did not inherit any of our depravity. He was conceived, but not in sin; and was fashioned according to a man, but not shapen in iniquity. He was in the likeness of sinful flesh, but that was all; for he himself knew no sin. His conduct was inoffensive, and his nature undefiled: he neither brought pollution into the world, nor contracted any during his stay in it. He was a Lamb without blemish, and without spot: he was manifested to take away sin, but in him was no sin. Hence when the tempter came, he could find nothing in him. 1 John iii. 5.

2. He was filled with the Spirit, and all the graces were in full maturity. Holiness prevails in us according to the degrees in which we are influenced by the Spirit of God; but it was given to him without measure, and he was anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows. Every thought, word, and action was under a divine direction, and the wicked one touched him not. The avenues of his soul were so guarded that no evil could find access, and no weapon that was formed against him could prosper.

3. As the Son of God he was possessed of a divine nature, and therefore originally and essentially holy, even as the Father himself is holy. He not only possessed all created excellencies, but all divine perfections; and the absolute purity of his nature was essential to his true and original character. Satan

ould find nothing in him, could make no impression pon him, but was and must be foiled and defeated in very encounter. We sometimes see how great a atter a little fire kindleth, and it is the policy of the nemy to make much out of a little; but here was othing at all that he could work upon, and therefore ll his labour would be in vain.

(1.) This subject may teach us to entertain low houghts of ourselves. O how much does Satan find n us, and how easily do his temptations fasten upon s! When the prince of this world cometh, he finds hat in us which would give him power to accomplish ur utter ruin, if grace did not prevent. Let us therefore never enter into the combat: all our safety lies in leeing from it.

(2.) Let it teach us to cherish high and adoring houghts of Christ. He fought and conquered; he poiled principalities and powers, and made a shew of hem openly. All our salvation and all our hopes depended upon this triumph: that salvation is now obtained, and those hopes shall be fully realized. Now "*unto* Him that loved us, and washed us from our ins in his own blood, to him be glory and dominion or ever and ever. Amen."

SERMON IX.

HEB. x. 26.

There remaineth no more sacrifice for sins.

To many a disconsolate soul, overwhelmed with guilt, and awful apprehensions of divine displeasure, these words have been like a message of death: they have from hence concluded that their case was desperate, and that they were for ever excluded from all hope of salvation. And some indeed, in the early ages, thought themselves warranted, from this and similar passages, to exclude for ever from their communion those who had fallen into any open sin after baptism, whatever proofs they might afterwards give of true repentance. But all this is going beyond what is written. The design of the apostle is to warn the Hebrews, and to warn us, of the danger of apostasy; but not to exclude the penitent from hope. "If we sin wilfully," says he, "after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries."

In order to understand the passage, let us notice the following particulars—

1. The apostle is not here speaking of the common infirmities which may attend the godly, but of wilful transgressions; or, as David calls them, "presump-

ious sins," from which he prayed to be delivered. Psal. xix. 13.) To "sin wilfully" is to sin with premeditation and design; not through any sudden temptation, so as to be taken unawares, as Peter was; but watching for an opportunity, and laying schemes for the accomplishment of a wicked purpose, like Judas; 'making provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof." To sin wilfully is also to sin resolutely, without present reluctance or after relentings; being neither restrained by present difficulties, nor terrified by future consequences. Such was the conduct of some in Jeremiah's time, who said, "As for the word which thou hast spoken unto us in the name of the Lord, we will not hearken unto thee; but we will certainly do whatsoever thing goeth forth out of our own mouth." Jer. xliv. 16, 17.

2. Neither are sins of ignorance intended, but such are against light and strong conviction. To sin against knowledge is one of the greatest aggravations, and that which leads on to perdition. The apostle, when describing such as are filled with all unrighteousness, says, "Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them." (Rom. i. 32.) By the knowledge of the truth however, mentioned in the text, appears to be meant that general acquaintance with the gospel, or the way of salvation by Christ, which is common to those who attend upon or profess the gospel, and not that which is special to such as are spiritually enlightened, and who are said to have received "the love of the truth," as well as the knowledge of it, that they might be saved. The word here rendered knowledge also signifies an acknowledgment: so that the persons warned were not only such as had been made acquainted with the truth, but appear to have made a profession of it; and therefore by sinning wilfully against such light, they had not only violated their

own consciences, but brought a reproach upon cause, and were in danger of total apostacy. whatever light they might have received, they never felt the power of the gospel. Those who the truth will not sell it at any price.

3. The text speaks not of sins in general, th knowingly and presumptuously committed, but of sin in particular, and such as excludes from the of salvation. Now this appears to be no other an absolute and entire rejection of the truth which been professedly received; and this is called a "t ing under foot the Son of God, and counting the of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an holy thing, and doing despite unto the Spirit of grace." (ver. 29.) This is not a mere defection from duty, in the case of a backslider; but an apostacy fro truth, from the truth of the gospel; a renunciation the only ground of a sinner's hope—the sacrifice atonement offered by the Son of God. It is not a me departure from some important doctrines of the gosp as was the case with some of the Corinthians and G latians, and others among the churches in Asia, b from that which is essential to the gospel, and to sinner's acceptance with God. It not merely mars th edifice, but subverts the foundation of faith. Neith is it a rejection of the gospel only, or the way of sal vation by the sacrifice of Christ: it is a doing this wit contempt, against the clearest light and evidence to the contrary—a treading under foot the Son of God counting the blood of the covenant an unholy thing doing despite to the Spirit of grace, and thus sinning wilfully after having received the knowledge of th truth. Peter also tells us that those who "deny th Lord that bought them, bring upon themselves swi destruction." Those who cast the Son of God fro his throne must expect that he will cast them into hel They divest him of his glory, and he will cover the *with disgrace.* Let those who deny the divinity

t, or the atonement, tremble for the consequences! is is the stone which is set at nought of you ers, which is become the head of the corner. ıer is there salvation in any other; for there is no name under heaven given among men whereby ust be saved—Other foundation can no man lay that is laid, which is Christ Jesus." To reject acrifice of Christ therefore, is to set aside the lation, and subvert the whole gospel. "There 'neth no more sacrifice for sins!" No relief is ɔr such; there is no other way of satisfying divine e, of expatiating human guilt, or of providing for xercise of mercy in a way of righteousness; and ɔd cannot exercise mercy but in a way of righte- ss, so those who reject that way can have no ıd to expect it. Typical sacrifices and ceremo- xpiations are all abolished; and if Christ's once ng himself in the end of the world do not suffice, ill not offer himself again. "Being raised from ead, he dieth no more: death hath no more domi- over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin : but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God." e remaineth therefore no more sacrifice for sin. er ii. 1. Acts iv. 11, 12. 1 Cor. iii. 11. Rom. 10.

t us now proceed with the subject, which evi- y contains the following propositions—that the ı of Christ was a sacrifice for sin—that there is no sacrifice—and that those who reject this are left ıut hope.

The death of Christ was a real and proper sacri- or sin.

e sacrifices under the law were figurative: this eal and effectual. They were shadows: this was ubstance. They were to consist of the best a ın had, whether of the fruits of the field or of the

flock: and what could God give greater or better than his only-begotten Son? Neither heaven nor earth could provide such another lamb for a burnt offering! If the whole creation had been offered up, it would not have been a sacrifice of equal value with this. "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son—He spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all—Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts."——What was offered under the law was to be a person's own; for the Lord hateth robbery for a burnt-offering. Hence David would not build an altar upon Araunah's ground, nor sacrifice those oxen which he would generously have given him for that purpose; but would make them his own property by giving a price equal to their value. So Christ "laid down *his own life*"—and "bore our sins in *his own body* upon the tree." He did not offer that which cost him nothing; neither were we "redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot—By himself he purged our sins, and is set down on the right hand of the Majesty on high."——It is also included in the nature of a sacrifice that it be vicarious, or offered in the room and stead of another, so that the punishment due to the offender should be borne by the substitute. And such was the sacrifice of Christ. Not like the high priest under the law, had he to offer first for himself, and then for the sins of the people; for he himself knew no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: all he did and suffered was for our sakes, that he might bring us unto God. "The Messiah shall be cut off, but not for himself—He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed." Christ and his people were considered as one in the purposes and designs of God; and before

actually gave himself for them he was given to
m, to become their surety and representative, so
t the punishment of their sins might be transferred
him, and the fruits of his obedience to them.
nce "he was made sin for us who knew no sin, that
might be made the righteousness of God in him—
died, the just for the unjust, that he might bring
unto God." In short, the doctrine of salvation
the blood of the cross is what an apostle calls "the
pel." It is not to be considered as a component
rt, but as fundamental and essential to the truth;
l that doctrine which does not embrace this is not
gospel of Christ, but another gospel. This is the
ithful saying, that Christ Jesus came into the
rld to save sinners, even the chief." This is "the
ord, that God hath given to us eternal life, and
life is in his Son." This also is "the gospel, that
rist died for our sins according to the scriptures."
n. ix. 26. Zech. xiii. 7. Isai. liii. 5. John iii.
Rom. viii. 32. 1 Cor. xv. 1—3. 1 Tim. i. 15.
n v. 2.

I. The death of Christ is the only sacrifice for

'Sacrifice and offering," says he, "thou wouldst
; but a body hast thou prepared me." Other sa-
ices and offerings had been made, but the Lord
ld find no pleasure in them, for they could not take
y sin. It was a reasonable inquiry that was made
ld, "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord,
bow myself before the high God?" Or, as it is in
original, How shall I prevent or anticipate the
d? "Shall I come before him with burnt offer-
s, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be
sed with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands
ivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my
sgressions, the fruit of my body for the sin of my
?" All this the awakened sinner would do, if he

thought it available, when guilt lies heavy upon his soul, and wrath follows hard after him: but these things can never come up to the requirements of God's holy law, nor answer the demands of divine justice. The only way of acceptance is by the blood of the cross, and this is it that God hath consecrated for us. There is no other sacrifice for sin but Christ, who was delivered for our offences, and rose again for our justification. No one could mediate between God and man, but he who was himself both God and man. "I have laid help, saith the Lord, upon one that is mighty," and upon one only. As the high priest under the law was alone permitted to enter in the holy of holies, and that not without blood; so Jesus only could offer a sacrifice for us, and enter into the holiest of all with his own blood. When he purged our sins, it was "by himself," and not another, and is now sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high. There is but one Advocate, but one propitiation, and there needs no other. The payment was equal to the debt, and the oblation as noble as sin was vile. "By one offering he hath for ever perfected them that are sanctified." The law in effect says, I am contented: justice says, I am satisfied: and the great God, as moral governor and judge, says, I am well pleased. Hence that triumph of the apostle: "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again; who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." At the bar of human prejudice and vulgar report, many things may be laid to their charge that are not true; and at the bar of conscience many things may be brought against them that are true; but at the divine tribunal who shall dare to become an accuser where God is the judge, or to condemn those whom he will justify?—Farther, as there is no other sacrifice for sins, and needs no other, so in the nature

of things there can be no other than that which Christ has offered. When God by an awakened conscience says to the sinner, "Pay me that thou owest;" his trembling lips reply, "Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all." But does he do it? No. Can he do it? No, by no means. And as his own efforts would be unavailing, so would those of all the human race. "None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him: for the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever." That also which is impossible to men would be equally so to angels: could our sins be imputed to them, it would sink them in eternal misery. We are required indeed, to present "our bodies a living sacrifice to God;" and it may be acceptable as an offering of gratitude, but not of atonement. A finite creature can never satisfy for an infinite evil; and such are all our transgressions against God, being committed against an infinite Being. Were it possible in the future course of our lives perfectly to obey the divine law, that would be no more than was our duty to do, and the discharge of present obligation could make no atonement for guilt which had been before contracted. "He that offendeth in one point is guilty of all;" and "cursed be the man that continueth not in all things written in the law to do them." The sufferings and death of Christ were alone sufficient to expiate human guilt, and there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin. Psal. xlix. 7, 8. Rom. viii. 33, 34. Gal. iii. 10. Heb. i. 3.

III. Those who reject the sacrifice of Christ are left without hope.

Their iniquity is like that of the house of Eli: "it shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering for ever." We may be ignorant of some truths which do not immediately affect our present comfort or future

happiness; but there are others which are essential to salvation. All errors are injurious; but some are destructive. The satisfaction of Christ is a truth which enters into the very essence of religion; so that if a man renounce it, whatever he may be, he is not a christian. To reject the blood of the covenant is to reject the covenant itself, even that covenant which David regarded as containing all his salvation, and all his desire. This is to offer a bold affront both to the justice and mercy of God, and is a bare-faced contradiction to the law and the gospel. Those who have no interest in Christ, have neither part nor lot in his salvation; no interest in the promises, in the favour of God, or eternal life. The sin that is not expiated by the blood of Christ will never be expiated, and he that is filthy must be filthy still. "There remaineth no more sacrifice for sins!"

Inferences.

1. If Christ became a sacrifice, this will account for the treatment he met with both from the hands of God and man. He suffered the desert of sin, because he was charged with it as our surety; and being such, he submitted to that pain and ignominy which was due to sinners. The slaying of the sacrifice under the law prefigured the violent death of the Saviour, and the burning it upon the altar set forth those impressions of divine wrath which he experienced in the garden and on the cross. "Thus it was written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer:" and thus he became "an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour." Luke xxiv. 46. Ephes. v. 2.

2. If the death of Christ be the only sacrifice for sins, let us not only hold fast this doctrine, but actually build upon it as the foundation of all our hopes and comfort. Trusting in any thing short of this will prove presumption, and end in eternal destruction. Nothing but this can support us in our dying moments, or avail us when we stand before the bar of God.

thing

3. As the passage which we have now considered speaks terror to those who either never embraced the doctrine of Christ's atoning sacrifice, or who have shamefully apostatised from it, so it speaks terror to them only. Such indeed are running a dreadful risk of unpardoned guilt and divine displeasure, and it behoves them to take warning. There remaineth no more sacrifice for sins. No: nothing remains to them but "a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries!" Those who are the enemies of Christ are the greatest enemies to their own souls: and however awful their apprehensions may be, the terrors of a future state will far exceed them, and they will find it a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God? But let those who put their trust in Christ crucified, and who know no other hope, rejoice and be exceeding glad; for he is able to keep that which they commit unto him until that day.

SERMON X.

JAMES ii. 18.

Shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.

THIS beautiful sarcasm gives a severe reproof to the presumptuous hope and carnal confidence of self-deceiving hypocrites; who profess to rely upon Christ as a Saviour, but obey him not as their king; who embrace the promises, but reject his commands, and sin that grace may abound. Come, as if the apostle had said, come thou formalist, who pretendest to christian experience without a corresponding practice, I will pluck off thy mask, and shew thee thy true character. Be not like the man who beholdeth his natural face in a glass, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. Thou hast faith! Thou thinkest that thou hast it; and some kind of faith indeed thou hast. And I have works; not works without faith, but as the fruit of it. Shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.

Here it may be observed,—that true faith is visible—that it is made so by its fruit—and that those therefore who pretend to faith, while destitute of good works, are awfully deceived.

I. True faith is visible.

The objects of faith indeed are invisible; an unseen God, an unseen Saviour, and an unseen world; but faith itself is not so, it is something that may be seen. It may not be so at all times, or in an equal degree; for as clouds are about the divine throne, so they sometimes encompass the christian, and hide his graces from himself and the view of others. Christ said to his disciples on a certain occasion, "How is it that ye have no faith?" They had it in the habit, but not in the act; in the principle, but not in exercise. But though faith, like the other christian graces, may be concealed for a time, yet it will not always be so. It is at all times visible to Him whose eyes are as a flame of fire, and who knows them that are his and them that are not so. He can see it, though the rank weed of unbelief growing by it overshadows it, spoils its beauty, and hinders its growth. Genuine faith produces such a change in the disposition and conduct that it may be seen. A false faith is not so: it is a mere nonentity, and can no more be seen than a shadow can be felt. But when Barnabas came to Antioch, "he saw the grace of God and was glad." So James was not only a professor and preacher of the gospel, but a practical believer. "I will shew thee my faith," said he, and let others judge. Faith is not like a jewel lodged in the bottom of a mountain that cannot be seen; but like seed sown in the earth though as a grain of mustard-seed, which springs up and grows so that the fowls of the air may lodge in its branches.

II. True faith is made visible by its fruits.

The same word that begets faith, also causes it to grow and multiply. "The gospel is come unto you," saith the apostle, "as it is in all the world, and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth."

An unfruitful gospel is not the gospel of Christ, and an unfruitful faith is not the faith of God's elect. As the invisible things of God are clearly seen by the things that are made, even his eternal power and godhead; so faith, though in itself invisible, is clearly to be seen by its glorious effects; and the more strong and lively it is in itself, the more conspicuous it will be to others. Faith and obedience are inseparably connected, both in the word of God and in christian experience. Those who partake of the benefits of Christ's death will imitate the virtues of his life: and as they hope to be with him in heaven, so they will endeavour to be like him on earth. This only will prove the truth of our own religion, and recommend it to others: for it is not by thinking right, but doing well, that we are to put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. Mankind see not the motions of the heart, but observe the outward actions. They are diligent observers of christian conduct, making that their rule of judgment, and indeed it cannot well be otherwise. "Faith without works is dead." It is void of all beauty, influence, and energy: it is useless and unprofitable, both to ourselves and others. It neither relieves the indigent, nor vindicates the cause of the oppressed; it neither administers to us any present good, nor will it stand us instead another day. It cannot be shewn: it is a fanciful imaginary thing, having no proofs nor evidences, and is as if it did not exist.—The devils have faith, and faith that is operative; for they "believe and tremble"—tremble at that power which is armed against them, at that wrath which they have provoked, and which in part they feel, but will more fully experience hereafter. But though it is operative, yet not the right way: it produces fear, but not love: it is not fruitful of good works, but of evil ones; does not bring them near to God, but keeps them at a greater distance. The faith of many however is no better than that of devils, and

some there are who neither believe nor tremble.—Good works are the proper fruits of faith; and though they do not bring us into a state of grace, yet they afford evidence that we are in such a state, and no proof is sufficient where this is wanting. Neither the amiableness of our disposition, nor discernment into the mysteries of the gospel, nor flaming zeal, nor strict regard to modes of worship, though of divine institution, will prove the reality of our religion without a sanctified heart and a holy life. 1 Cor. xiii. 1—3.

It may not be improper here to notice the seeming difference between Paul and James on the subject of works, especially as some may think their statements incompatible with each other, or find it difficult to reconcile them. Paul affirms, that "By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified," and that "a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." James says, "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only." The former shews how a poor self-condemned sinner, trembling on the precipice of eternal misery, may find acceptance with God, and tells us that by the deeds of the law, either before or after conversion, in whole or in part, no flesh can be justified. The latter treats not of the ground of a sinner's acceptance with God, but of that which proves him to be a believer, or by which his profession of faith in Christ is justified. The one shews how our persons may be accepted of God, and the other how our faith may be approved of men: the former is by faith without works, and the latter is by works only. The one lays the foundation on which we should build, and the other points out the materials of which the building should consist; such as gold, silver, and precious stones, which will stand the trial; and not wood, hay, and stubble, which the fire will consume. And as the two apostles treat of a different kind of justification, so also of a different kind of faith. Paul speaks of that which is wrought by the Spirit of God, that

saving faith by which the just are said to live: but James of that notional and common faith, which has the name without any one of its essential and discriminating properties. The one describes the dead inoperative faith of a carnal professor, and the other the lively energetic faith of a real christian.

1. We may observe, that though works are distinct from faith, so distinct that they are frequently opposed to it, yet they always accompany it as the proper fruit and effect of saving faith, like water from the fountain or light from the sun. True faith is not barren, but fruitful in good works. Faith is that which unites us to Christ, and one great end of that union is, that we should bring forth fruit unto God. The union between the soul and sin will be in a measure dissolved where there is a real union between the soul and Christ. Christ also "gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." A great part of our salvation consists in our being saved from sin as well as from its consequences. And the gift of the Holy Spirit is for the purpose of making us holy and restoring us to the image of God which we had lost. He is holy in himself and in all his operations. Good works are the fruit of his sanctifying influences, and he leads to a city of habitation by leading us in the paths of righteousness. Rom. vii. 4. Titus ii. 14.

2. As good works are the concomitants, so also the touchstone of faith, and the rule by which we are to judge of its being genuine. As we judge of the health and soundness of the body by its vigour and activity, so of the nature of faith by its lively actings and good fruit. The strength and the growth of this principle may also be ascertained in the same way. Faith ennobles our works, and works test the reality of faith. Faith produces works as the tree produces fruit, and works adorn faith as fruit adorns the tree. Faith itself is unseen, being seated in the heart; but works bring it

forth to public view that its glory may be seen. Faith is a personal benefit; but good works are general and diffusive. Where there is much faith there will be much fruit, and where there is but little faith there will be little fruit, and where there is no faith there will be no fruit at all. Hence hypocritical professors are compared to "clouds without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots." When God sits as judge, works are utterly excluded. "Enter not into judgment with thy servant," says David; "for in thy sight shall no flesh living be justified." Not the most pious resolutions or endeavours, nor the greatest number of good works will avail as the ground of a sinner's acceptance with God. But when we are judged by others, or sit in judgment on ourselves, works must bring in their testimony and decide our character and state. Christ will vindicate us before God, but good works must vindicate us before men. "Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them." Psal. cxliii. 2. Matt. vii. 15—20. Jude 12.

3. The truth of these propositions is confirmed by the examples which the apostle adduces. "Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? (ver. 21.) Not indeed before God, for he was in a justified state before he had offered up his son; but now it was openly declared, that his faith was justified rather than his person. The offering declared him to be justified, but did not make him so. Hence another apostle tells us that "Abraham had not whereof to glory before God," which he would have had, if any

of his works had contributed to his justification, or been made the ground of his acceptance with God. James introduces another example, and says, "Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?" (ver. 25.) This act shewed indeed the reality and strength of her faith, and she stands upon record as an exemplary believer; for she owned and honoured God, and God will own and honour her; and these things sufficiently prove that "as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also," but that is all. As sinners we are still accepted of God by faith in the Redeemer, and not by works of righteousness; but it is by works that faith is made manifest. In this way many examples are introduced in the eleventh of Hebrews, of Enoch, Moses, and others, to shew that faith wrought with their works as well as produced them, otherwise neither faith nor works would be approved of God.

III. Those who pretend to faith, and yet are destitute of good works, are awfully deceived.

Such will one day be the scorn of men and angels, and even of God himself. "Shew me thy faith without thy works," if it be possible. The attempt is vain and delusive! You might as well pretend to remove mountains, or dry up the sea. Be not deceived therefore: let such vain words have an end. Can a sinful and unholy creature, who neither fears God nor trusts in the Redeemer, who neither cares about his own soul nor the souls of others, can he be a believer? Can he be possessed of faith who is a stranger and an enemy to holiness? He may indeed have a faith that will answer the purpose of stupifying his conscience, and lulling him into the deep sleep of carnal security; but it will not avail him in a dying hour, nor at the bar of God. It will neither save him from misery, nor bring

him to glory. If the heart be unhumbled and the life unholy, duties neglected and corruptions unsubdued, our faith is a mere pretence, and our hope is all a delusion. That faith, which leaves a man where it finds him—as much attached to the world and under the power of sin and Satan as before, is no faith at all.—Hence we may learn,

(1.) It is as impious to deny the utility and necessity of good works as it is to ascribe merit to them. They are the way to the kingdom, as one said, though not the cause of reigning. The life is the index of the heart. Leaves and blossoms will not evidence a christian, but fruit will. Hearers of the word, and not doers of it, only deceive themselves. Faith may be previous to good works, but cannot long exist without them. James i. 22.

(2.) All works performed before faith, or while in a state of unbelief, are no better than dead works, and cannot be acceptable with God. Works do not give value to faith, but it is faith that makes works acceptable: it is the tree that makes the fruit good, and not the fruit that makes the tree good. Enoch was uniform and constant in his obedience, and walked with God; but it was by faith that he obtained this testimony that he pleased God. Let our affections be ever so warm and lively, and our conduct ever so consistent, yet both the one and the other must be influenced by faith as the vital principle of all true religion. Faith in the promises, in the sacrifice and righteousness of our Saviour, is that only which brings us near to God, and renders our persons and services acceptable. Let it be our care to preserve that connexion between faith and holiness which the scriptures teach, and not put that asunder which they have joined together, knowing that as works without faith are dead, so faith without works is dead also.

SERMON XI.

ZECH. ix. 12.

Turn you to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope.

GOD's children have a place of refuge, and the reason why others have not is, they flee from it instead of fleeing to it. The words of our text are a call to souls in distress: they speak the language of our Saviour: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Matt. xi. 28.

I. Consider the relief provided—a "strong hold."

However, not any strong hold which we may fancy or prepare for ourselves, though the imagination of man is very fruitful in inventions of this kind. When conscience is alarmed, any thing is sought to that will afford a little present ease, and lying vanities are as common now as lying wonders were in the dark days of popery. The Physician of souls is neglected, and physicians of no value are applied to. "When Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah saw his wound, then went Ephraim to the Assyrian, and sent to king Jareb: yet could he not heal you, nor cure you of your wound." Such has been and still [illegible] the conduct of sinful men. They make any thing [illegible]ir refuge rather than Him who is "as a hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest, and as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." Some, overwhelmed

with a sense of guilt, and terrified with apprehensions of future wrath, fly to the absolute and uncovenanted mercy of God. Some to their church privileges, and others to their good works and religious performances. Some hope to conciliate the divine favour by their prayers and tears, their amendments and reformations; and others hope to escape punishment for their negative goodness, not having been like this publican or that sinner. "The rich man's wealth is the strong city; the destruction of the poor is their poverty." The one trusts in his riches, considering them as an evidence of the divine favour; and the others make a plea of their poverty, hoping that their misery in this world will entitle them to happiness in the next. Some place their safety in what they have done, and others in what they intend to do; some in acts of charity, and others in acts of devotion. Thus they kindle a fire, and compass themselves about with the sparks which they have kindled: a little present ease they may find in this, but in the end they shall lie down in sorrow. Prov. x. 15. Isai. li. 11.

It must therefore not be any refuge that we resort to, but that which the Scriptures have provided, and which is intended in the text. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe." The perfections of God, his wisdom, power and goodness, are all engaged for the protection of his people. The covenant of grace, with its glorious provisions and extensive promises, are as a strong hold: here the righteous find safety in a time of danger, and comfort in a time of trouble. Under the shadow of this covenant they may repose with satisfaction, and rest secure amidst a thousand threatening evils, saying with David, "This is all my salvation, and all my desire."—The Lord Jesus Christ especially is the refuge of poor sinners, and to him the preceding verse evidently refers. "As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant, I have sent forth thy prisoners out of

the pit wherein is no water." He is both the foundation on which the believer builds, and the fortress in which he hides. He stood the storm which would have overwhelmed us, and by being our surety he became our refuge. Christ is to his people what the ark was to Noah; and when the world shall be again destroyed, they shall be "found in him." The strong holds of Satan shall be demolished; but that which God hath provided for his people shall bid defiance to the rage of all their enemies. Its walls are so high that they can never be scaled, and its foundations so deep that they can never be undermined. Here we are safe, and only here. Prov. xviii. 10. Isai. xxxii. 2.

II. Consider what is implied in our seeking this relief—"Turn you to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope."

1. It supposes that by nature we are turned another way, having not only an indifference, but a dislike to the true way of salvation. We are for drawing water from our own cistern, though it be a broken one, and for gathering fruit from our own fig-tree, though it can yield us nothing. We choose to lie under the sentence of condemnation and death, rather than come to Christ for justification and life. We will neither have him for our Redeemer, nor our sovereign; will neither be obedient to his laws, nor beholden to his grace. "Ye will not come unto me," saith Christ, "that ye might have life." Either we do not seek after salvation, or we seek it not in God's way. We form purposes when we should put up prayers, and work when we ought to believe. We prefer our own earnings to the free gift of our Saviour, and our own dross to the pearl of great price. The stone which is made the head of the corner is to unbelievers a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence; and instead of building on the foundation that God hath laid in Zion, they build

on the sand. It is the condition of all men by nature that they are "without Christ, having no hope, and without God in the world." Ephes. ii. 12.

2. Turning to the strong hold implies a principle of grace implanted in us, by which the mind is renewed and directed to the Saviour. This removes the darkness of the understanding, the perverseness of the will, and the carnality of the affections; so that we are led to form different sentiments, and pursue a different path from what we trod before. Of unwilling we become willing, of reluctant and rebellious we are made pliant and obedient, and now feel our need of that which we formerly rejected. To direct those to a strong hold who are not aware of danger, would be like recommending a physician to persons who thought themselves in good health: but a wounded conscience wants ease and rest; and when divine justice, like the avenger of blood, pursues the sinner, he is glad of a place of refuge. As Christ is his last resort, so now he is his only one, and an interest in him is more desired than all the riches of the world. Before, he saw no form nor comeliness in the Saviour, why he should be desired: now he appears the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely.

3. It implies the total renunciation of all other refuges as insufficient and vain. "Ashur shall not save us," say the returning penitents; "we will not ride upon horses; neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods; for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy." The things in which we formerly trusted, and in which we gloried, are now darkened, withered and consumed. "The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of man shall be bowed down, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day: for the day of the Lord of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up, and he shall be brought low." The rich man no longer boasts of his riches, nor the wise

man of his wisdom, knowing that neither the one nor the other will profit in the day of wrath. The self-confident pharisee now renounces his own righteousness, as a bed too short to stretch himself upon, and a covering too narrow to keep him warm. Conscious of his guilt, and alarmed of his danger, the awakened sinner exclaims with the prophet, "Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains: truly in the Lord our God is the salvation of Israel." Good works are no longer confided in, and evil works, the works of darkness, are forsaken. The way of unrighteousness is abandoned, and sin appears as hateful in its power as it is dreadful in its consequences. Isai. ii. 11, 12. Jer. iii. 13.

4. There is now a joining ourselves to the Lord in an everlasting covenant never to be forgotten. Being turned to the Saviour, there is a cleaving unto him with full purpose of heart; and the language of such is, "Behold, we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God—To whom, Lord, should we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life—We have forsaken all, and followed thee." The convinced sinner, driven from all his refuges of lies and hiding places of deceit, amidst a multitude of distressing fears and misgivings of heart, now resigns himself up to Christ, to be justified by his righteousness, sanctified by his grace, upheld by his power, and governed by his holy laws. He embraces him as his Saviour, and submits to him as his Lord: he cheerfully bows to its sceptre, and cordially acquiesces in the methods of his grace. Renouncing all self-dependence, he places his hopes on the righteousness and strength of another for acceptance with God, and perseverance to eternal life; saying with Paul, "I know in whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him until that day."—This is turning to the strong hold; and where this is done aright it is done with earnestness, and fervency of mind. "The captive

exile hasteneth that he may be loosed, and that he should not die in the pit." The soul that has fled for refuge, to lay hold on the hope set before us, will keep his hold, and never wish to turn back any more. Where there is a real closing with Christ, there will also be a cleaving to him; and the more steadfastly we cleave, the greater satisfaction we shall find in him. The confidence which believers place in Christ at first, they will hold fast unto the end. Isai. li. 14. Jer. iii. 23. Matt. xix. 27. John vi. 68. 2 Tim. i. 12.

III. Notice the characters addressed—"Turn you to the strong hold, *ye prisoners of hope.*"

1. They are considered as prisoners. All sinners by nature are in a lost state, and as such are God's prisoners, deeply indebted to his law and justice, owing him ten thousand talents, and have nothing to pay. Instead of paying any part of the debt, they are still increasing it, and running still farther in arrears. They are also Satan's prisoners: he possesses their hearts, and keeps them in a state of dreadful but voluntary bondage. Nor are they less enslaved by their own corruptions and lusts, which like so many massy fetters bind them fast, and they are sold under sin. They dream of liberty, but are the worst of slaves. Like prisoners they sit in darkness: there is darkness within and without, and eternal darkness is before them. They are put to difficult labour; for the way of transgressors is hard. Like Samson, they grind in the prison house. Christ's yoke is easy, and his burden light; but that which sinners bear is hard and heavy. They have but poor allowance: like the Prodigal, they work hard, and yet, like him, they fare hard. The satisfaction they feel will never compensate the pains they take, and there is no servitude so base and ignoble as that of sin. Ungodly men generally increase to more ungodliness: custom in sin strengthens the habits of sin, till at length hardness of heart is

contracted, and they commit all manner of iniquity with greediness.—It is the work of an almighty Saviour to deliver these prisoners out of the pit: he alone can free them from the bondage of corruption, and bring them into the glorious liberty of the children of God. If the Son shall make us free, then, and not till then, we shall be free indeed. It is he that "opens the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sat in darkness out of the prison-house. Isai. xlii. 7.

2. They are prisoners of hope. All men are so in some sense, while life continues, and the sentence not executed upon them. Vessels of wrath, till they are filled with wrath, may be made vessels of mercy. Enemies may be turned into friends, and hardened sinners may become broken-hearted saints. Idle vagrants may be sent to work in the vineyard at the eleventh hour of the day. We cannot say that any individual is irrecoverably lost till the season of probation is ended. Whilst Christ stands knocking, the door may be opened; and if opened, he will enter in, and all former repulses and affronts shall be forgotten. Now therefore is the accepted time: behold, now is the day of salvation. Let not the young presume, nor the aged despair. But though all men are in this general sense prisoners of hope, yet there are some that are so more especially.

(1.) Those who enjoy the means of grace, and to whom the gospel is preached in its power and purity. It is no small privilege to sit under an affectionate and awakening ministry, which warns us of our danger and exhorts us to flee from the wrath to come: this is one of the principal means which God employs for the conversion of souls, and there is more hope of such than of others, who neither hear nor know the joyful sound. Where the blind lead the blind, the case is hopeless and deplorable: but in whatever place the Lord stations a faithful and laborious minister, we may

reasonably expect that he has some work for him to do. Paul must abide at Corinth, because God had much people in that city: and may it not afford encouragement respecting many of our towns and cities that he hath placed his faithful servants, and planted his gospel in them for a series of years? The dawning of the day is a presage of the rising sun; and God cannot be said fully to have left any people till the gospel has departed from them.

(2.) There is hope of such as have frequent convictions of sin, some desires after God, and whose consciences retain a degree of tenderness, so that they neither neglect private duties, nor are wholly unaffected under the preaching of the word. We sometimes witness the rising sigh, and the falling tear, and are ready to hope that all is not in vain. Like Zaccheus, they seem to be in the Saviour's way; and who knows but he may look up and say, as he did to that publican, "Come down, for to-day I must abide at thy house!" They are almost persuaded to be christians, and we would hope they will become altogether such. Such appearances resemble the little cloud which Elijah's servant saw, and may be the forerunner of a delightful and refreshing shower.

(3.) Those also are prisoners of hope whose chains have been broken, but who through unwatchfulness have been led captive by the enemy. Many have had to lament the power of indwelling sin, as well as Paul and David; and though it has not had the dominion over them, yet it has frequently brought them into bondage, and they have cried, "O wretched man that I am; who shall deliver me from this body of sin and death—Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy name!" As dead sinners may be quickened, so backsliders may be restored. The cords of iniquity which hold them shall be broken; the power of their enemies shall be restrained, and their mouths be stopped. God's frowns shall be turned into smiles, and

their lamentations into joy. Their song shall be like that of David, "Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers: the snare is broken, and we are escaped." Those whose bonds have been loosed may be brought into darkness, and may continue there for a time, but they shall not die in the pit. "Such as sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, being bound in affliction and iron; because they rebelled against the words of God, and contemned the counsel of the Most High; therefore he brought down their heart with labour; they fell down, and there was none to help. Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he saved them out of their distresses: he brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and brake their bands in sunder—The Lord heareth the poor, and despiseth not his prisoners—For he hath looked down from the height of his sanctuary; from heaven did the Lord behold the earth, to hear the groaning of the prisoner, to loose those that are appointed to death." Psal. lxix. 33. cii. 19, 20. cvii. 10—14. cxxiv. 7. cxlii. 7.

Suffer now the word of exhortation. "Turn you to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope," O ye distressed sinners, and ye afflicted and deserted saints! Suppress your rising fears and desponding thoughts. An open and effectual door is set before you; a door out of that state of guilt and grief into which you have brought yourselves, into a state of peace and joy. Return then, as Noah's dove to the ark. Come to the strong hold—to the Saviour. Are you weak? He will strengthen you. Turn to him and plead the call in our text. You do not come without an invitation, and shall not be sent away without a blessing. Christ is a free refuge, and a safe one. When your spirit is overwhelmed, lift up your eyes, lift up your voice, lift up your heart to heaven, and cry with the psalmist, "O lead me to the rock that is higher than I!" Beware you do not take up with any rock but that on

h God hath built his church: let Christ and him fied be your only hope. If the law should find out of Christ, it will pour all its curses upon you. vine justice find you out of Christ, it will deliver o the tormentors. And if Satan find you out of it, he will seize you as his lawful prey. But if be found in him, all will be well: the law cannot emn, Satan cannot injure, and justice will be your d, the guardian of your rights, and the avenger of wrongs. Eternal life depends on your being l in Christ; but if you have not believed in him you will not be found in him hereafter. And where will you be? You are now prisoners of : but then you will be prisoners without hope. it will be a covering and a strong hold to all his le in the last day: then, though assaulted, they not be overcome; though distressed, they shall e destroyed; for God himself will be their defence, the fury of all their enemies will only be like a n against a wall. Happy for those who can adopt language of the apostle! "What things were to me, those I counted loss for Christ: yea doubt- and I count all things but loss for the excellency e knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom re suffered the loss of all things, and do count them lung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him!" iii. 7—9

SERMON XII.

Acts ix. 4.

Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

While Saul, armed with a commission from high priest, is breathing out threatenings and slaugh against the disciples of Jesus, in his way to Damas a light from heaven brighter than the meridian shines round about him, and a voice louder than th der penetrates to his very soul—"Saul, Saul, w persecutest thou me?"

We shall offer some general remarks upon the te and apply the subject to ourselves.

I. It is the general character of unconverted men be of a persecuting spirit.

"Cain," says Luther, "will kill Abel to the end the world." He might indeed with great propri make this observation, for few men have been m cruelly harassed or more wonderfully preserved fr their enemies than he. Speaking of Ishmael and Isa the apostle observes, "As then he that was born af the flesh, persecuted him that was born after t Spirit, even so it is now;" and so it will be as long a spark of the old hatred to God and godliness con nues in the world. The more zealous believers a for the truths of the gospel, the more conformal their lives are to the precepts of the law; the mo

circumspect they are in their walk, and the more holy in all manner of conversation, so much the more will the rage and malice of wicked men be levelled against them; for whatever they may pretend, it is not this or the other mode of worship, nor any of the appendages of religion, but religion itself that they hate, and against this it is that all their enmity is directed. "Ye have killed the just," said an apostle. And wherefore? Because they are just. "Cain was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. *And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.* Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you." Gal. iv. 29. James v. 6. 1 John iii. 12, 13.

There are, however, different kinds and degrees of persecution. Some have persecuted with the tongue, by slanders and reproaches, endeavouring to stain the character and hinder the usefulness of Christ's servants. "The words of their mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in their hearts: their words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords." Others have shewn their enmity by their doings, as well as by their words. "I persecuted this way unto death," says Paul, "binding and delivering into prisons both men and women." And what could he do more? The existence of human laws has done much to restrain these excesses, so that now we sit under our vines and fig-trees, none daring to make us afraid. But though we are not in danger of bonds and imprisonments, of banishment, and the spoiling of our goods; yet the enmity of the wicked will shew itself, either by injuries, unneighbourly treatment, vulgar abuse, or by one means or another. The church of Christ has always been as a lily among thorns, or like a bush on fire, but not consumed. Some of the Lord's people have been "tortured, not accepting deliverance; and others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover, of bonds and imprison-

ment. They were stoned, they were sawn asunder; were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins being destitute, afflicted, tormented: they wandered in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth." But "of whom the world was not worthy;" and though evil spoken of by men, they "obtained a good report through faith." Psal. lv. 21. Acts xxii. 4. Heb. xi. 35—39.

II. Christ has his eye upon persecutors, and is acquainted with all their ways.

He who knew not the day of judgment as man, or had no commission to reveal it as mediator, knows all things as God. He also views things in their proper light, and calls them by their proper names. What Saul called doing God service, he calls persecution. Omniscience and omnipresence are attributes peculiar to Deity, yet both belong to Christ: he is therefore truly and properly God. He was in heaven, when speaking to Nicodemus on earth; and is now on earth, while interceding for the saints in heaven. "No man," says he, "hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man who is in heaven." And as he is every where present, so he knows all things. He knows our thoughts before they are conceived, our words before they are expressed, and our actions before they are performed. He is intimately acquainted with all the good or evil that is in us, or done by us. He knew Saul's bloody designs, and his own gracious purposes towards him; what he was, and what he should shortly be. He knows the persecutor and the persecuted: there is not a step which his enemies take but he marks it well, nor a pain his servants feel but he beholds it with an eye of pity. His eyes are as a flame of fire: they are firmly fixed, and always fixed; never closed, and never wander. Our father, our master, our minister

may not see us, but Christ always does: he looks into all our actions, and into all our souls. Saul is on his way to Damascus, unobserved by the disciples, who were now accounted as sheep for the slaughter: but the Shepherd of the flock who watches around them, sees the enemy coming to devour, gives the alarm, and stops him in his wild career—"Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?"

III. The kindness or injuries done to his people, Christ considers as done to himself.

When the righteous answer him, saying, "Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee; or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in; or naked, and clothed thee; or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? Then the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." And as he graciously notices all the kindnesses shewn them for his sake, so he will resent the injuries that are offered. "Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm," is his language to their enemies; "for he that toucheth them toucheth the apple of mine eye." Thus the Saviour addressed the enraged Saul: "Why persecutest thou *me?*" These poor people at Damascus, however mean and despised, and whom thou followest with unrelenting rage, thirsting after their blood, are my people: I acknowledge them as part of myself, bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh. Their miseries I account as mine: in all their afflictions I am afflicted, and am touched with the feeling of their infirmities.

Let persecutors think of this and tremble: in distressing Christ's disciples, they grieve and affront their Lord and Master. The union between Christ and his

to thee, as if the Saviour had said, and to thee onl
Hence we are told that his companions heard a voi
but knew not what was said: to them it was an uni
telligible sound, but by him to whom it was address
it was perfectly understood. Ministers in preachi
the word, speak to all their hearers, and not to o
more than another: their language is, "Unto you,
men, I call; and my voice is to the sons of men
But Christ speaks to the individual, and does not spe
in vain. They draw the bow at a venture; but
aims at a certain mark, and never misses his aim.
is true, he now speaks by the ministry of the wor
but his sheep only hear his voice. Ministers spe
to the ear only, and can do no more; but he speaks
the heart. Of the Thessalonian believers it is sai
"When ye received the word of God, ye received
not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the wo
of God which effectually worketh also in you th
believe." Others heard it, and received it, but not
the way that they did.—Farther: Christ's call w
not only personal and special, but earnest and pre
ing. There is something vehement and affectionate
the address: Saul, Saul! The Lord saw the dang
he was in, that he was rushing on to ruin: he ther
fore warns him with a loud voice from heaven, a
both pities and pardons his delusion. We see he
that all intercourse between Christ and the sinn
begins on Christ's part: none seek him till they a
sought by him. His mercy is preventing mercy, a
previous to any inclination or endeavours on our pa
to seek after him.

VI. Persecution is a great sin, and when broug
home to the conscience of an awakened sinner, it
found to be so.

It is so unreasonable as to admit of no defen
Jesus asks the reason of Saul's conduct, "*Why* per

cutest thou me?" But no reason can be given, no excuse be made. When God heard the complaints of Job, he thus addressed him: "Gird up thy loins like a man, for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me." Similar to this is the import of Christ's language to the persecutor. What account canst thou give; what reason canst thou render for thy conduct? Saul, Saul, what art thou doing? Why persecutest thou me?

1. Is there any reason on my part? What injury have I done thee? what provocation have I given thee? Which of my offices offend thee? what part of my character or conduct makes me obnoxious to thy resentment? Art thou cruel because I am merciful? and because I am ready to pardon, art thou implacable? For which of my good works dost thou persecute me?

2. Is there any reason on the part of my people? Have they not learned of me to be meek and lowly in heart? Because they are my disciples, are they therefore worse parents or children, subjects or servants, friends or neighbours? Do piety towards God, and benevolence towards men, render them unfit for society, that they should not be suffered to live? Nay, are they not the salt of the earth, and the light of the world? So far from deserving censure, do they not merit praise? and instead of being thus opposed, are they not worthy of imitation?—Saul, why persecutest thou me?

3. Is there any reason on thy part? By whom art thou commissioned and authorised? Who invested thee with power to torment the bodies of men, and to tyrannize over their consciences? Do these disciples differ from thee; and dost thou not differ as much from them? Dost thou claim a right to judge for thyself; and have they not the same right? What sovereignty hast thou over the understanding; what dominion over the faith of another? Who made thee thy brother's

SERMON XIII.

MARK x. 26.

Who then can be saved?

IF we had heard Christ speaking to the young ruler we also might have been astonished at his doctrine. Amiable and lovely as this youth appeared, Jesus saw that he was far from the kingdom of heaven, and that notwithstanding his strict observance of moral precepts, his love of the world was incompatible with a state of salvation. The enquirer went away grieved: and Jesus looking on his disciples, made the following reflections: "How hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God—And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who then can be saved?"

Most men think it a very easy matter to be saved: they imagine they have to do with a God so made up of love and mercy, that if they do but abstain from the grosser acts of sin, and go on in a round of duty, or if they do but with their dying lips acknowledge that they have done amiss, and ask forgiveness, he will not find in his heart to reject them, but that all will be well. They do not consider that he who is gracious and merciful is also holy and righteous, and that as he pardoneth iniquity, transgression and sin, so he will by no means clear the guilty. Some dream of general grace, and others of general redemption; but if things were so, instead of asking, Who then can be saved,

it might rather be said, Who then can be lost. According to the notions of some men, the way to heaven is so wide that few can miss it; whereas he who is the faithful and true witness hath assured us, that it is so strait that few shall find it. The difficulties of salvation however do not arise from the want of power in God, for nothing is too hard for him: he can as easily save a world as he could at first create one. Nor does it arise from any want of sufficiency in Christ; for "he is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him;" yes, to the uttermost of our desires and necessities, and in the last extremity. He not only pardons, but abundantly pardons: he justifies freely and fully even from all things, from which we could not be justified by the law of Moses: he sanctifies wholly, in body, soul, and spirit: gives to the most unworthy a title to heaven, and works a meetness for it in the most polluted. The difficulties therefore arise from the nature of salvation itself, and our sinful aversion to it. We are weak and impotent, obstinate and incorrigible creatures: we will not frame our doings to turn unto God, or the Saviour, that we might have life. We will neither obey the precepts of the law, nor rely upon the grace of the gospel: we cannot save ourselves, and are not willing that God should save us. Considering our natural depravity, and the deplorable condition of mankind, we may well wonder and say, Who indeed can be saved?

I. Let us notice more particularly some of the difficulties in the way of our salvation.

1. The truths to be believed are some of them very mysterious, and, as Peter says, "Hard to be understood." There is nothing in divine revelation contrary to reason, but there may be many things that are beyond it: nothing that is inconsistent, but some things that are incomprehensible. What is said of the divine

Being, that "there are Three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit, and that these three are one," is beyond our comprehension; but who can wonder that it should be so? "For who by searching can find out God? who can find out the Almighty to perfection?" The doctrine of the Cross, though it was the wisdom of God and the power of God, yet to the Jews it was a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness. The doctrine of human depravity, and of the Holy Spirit's efficacy, the mediation of Christ, and eternal life through his death, are new and strange to the carnal mind, and difficult to be believed. The doctrine of the resurrection was a strange thing to the Athenians, and they seem to have so misunderstood it as to think that Paul was speaking of some new and unheard-of deity. And yet the belief of the truth is essential to salvation, and we can no more be saved without cordially embracing the doctrines of the gospel, than we could without the mediation of Christ. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him —If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die *in your* sins." Yet in order to a saving belief it is necessary, in some instances, that reason should submit to faith, and the mind must be previously enlightened by the Spirit of God.

2. The sacrifices to be made are also in some degree painful. That which cost our Saviour so much must surely cost us something. Hence he says, "If any man come after me, and hate not father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and sisters, yea and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." To the young ruler he also said, "Go thy way; sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow me." This makes salvation difficult, but not impossible. The disciples could say, "Lo, we

have left all, and have followed thee." But painful as it may be to suffer loss and bear reproaches for Christ's sake, there are other sacrifices as contrary to corrupt nature as these can be, and which must be submitted to if ever we be saved. The self-righteous must give up all their own righteousness, to which they so fondly cleave, and must count all things but loss, if they would win Christ, and be found in him. A total renunciation of all our own worthiness, and an exclusive dependance upon the righteousness of Christ, are essential to our acceptance with God, and the enjoyment of eternal life. Luke xiv. 26. Gal. ii. 16. Phil. iii. 7—9.

3. The dispositions to be exercised are such as are contrary to the natural bias of our depraved hearts. Repentance towards God, which is one of the first steps leading to salvation, is compared to the rending of the heart, the breaking of the bones, cutting off a right hand, or plucking out a right eye. Faith in Christ, to venture the soul upon him, on the bare encouragement of his word; to rely wholly upon him when we have nothing to recommend onrselves to him; to hold him fast when every thing within us is discouraging, and every thing without us looks dark and distressing, is no very easy work; and yet this we must do, if ever we be saved. It is the effect of Almighty power to bring a poor distressed sinner to believe in Christ, and the same influence must be exerted to enable him afterwards to live by faith, to fight the good fight of faith, and to lay hold on eternal life. Great is the confidence that can say, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him!" To sit in darkness, and yet look for light; amidst gathering clouds and impending storms, to hope for deliverance: and at length to resign our bodies to the grave, in hope of a blessed resurrection, is no small matter, To endure the bitterest reproaches from men, and the severest afflictions from the hand of

God, in the manner which christians are required t do, bespeaks no small degree of meekness and patience To joy in the Lord, and rejoice in the God of our sal vation, when all other streams are dried up, and ever earthly prospect fails us, will be found not a little dif ficult to flesh and blood: and yet this is the way tha leads to the kingdom, and the way we must take if eve we get there.

4. The duties to be performed. Drawing near t God in prayer is attended with difficulty: it is called wrestling with God, lifting up the heart, pouring ou the soul, and making intercession with groanings tha cannot be uttered. Considering how many sorts o hearers there are who bring forth no fruit, or none t perfection, and how slow of heart we are to understan and believe, it is no easy thing to hear the word o God aright, mixing faith with what we hear so that i may profit us. Is there no difficulty more especiall in renouncing a customary or constitutional evil, an keeping ourselves from our own iniquity? Is ther none in resisting a strong temptation, or gaining th victory over an inbred corruption which seeks to b gratified, and promises some great advantage? Is i not also sometimes difficult, without the voice behin us, to discern the path of duty, and having done so, t walk in it? To withstand the assaults of Satan, whos subtlety and strength are so powerful; to be upon ou watch and guard, like the men of Israel, with our in struments of labour in one hand and weapons of defenc in the other; and amidst a thousand allurements fron sensible objects, and alarms from our spiritual ene mies, to hold out in our christian course to the end Surely this is difficult work: so much so that the right eous themselves are said to be scarcely saved; no would they be saved at all, were it not for the grace o Christ which is able to bear them up, through honou and dishonour, good report and evil report, under th

greatest difficulties, and against the most violent oppositions. But his grace is sufficient for them, and his strength is made perfect in weakness.

5. The trouble and danger to which religion exposes its professors. Imprisonment and death have been the portion of Christ's followers, and still it is through much tribulation that they must enter the kingdom. The time has been when those who killed them thought they did God service, and such a time may come again. The christian religion still bears the marks of the Lord Jesus, for it is still a persecuted religion; and his people are still a poor and despised people. "Ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world, to confound the wise: and God hath chosen the weak things of the world, to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are; that no flesh should glory in his presence." These things are offensive to a carnal mind, and prove great difficulties in *the* way of a sinner's salvation: "but blessed is he," saith our Lord, "that is not offended in me." A man that is not afraid of hunger and thirst, nakedness, peril and sword, must be fully convinced of the goodness of the cause in which he is engaged; and he that can renounce riches and honour and pleasure, and submit to poverty, ignominy, torture and death, for the sake of Christ, must have great love to him, and strong faith in him. "None of these things move me" is not the language of every man, but it ought to be of every christian.

II. Attempt to answer the inquiry in our text: "Who then can be saved?"

Certainly not those who neglect the means of salvation, or who attend upon them in a light and careless

manner. We read of some who when invited to the marriage feast, "made light of it;" and many such there are still, who treat the invitations of the gospel with neglect and scorn. Nor can those hope for salvation, who, though convinced of its necessity, are faint and remiss in their endeavours to obtain it; who can content themselves with bare wishings, and feeble and ineffectual efforts, but who are strangers to that holy violence which the kingdom of heaven both suffers and requires. Nor those who habitually prefer other things before it, and leave Christ, sorrowing, because they have great possessions; who love the world better than heaven, and who for the friendship of man will renounce the favour of God. Nor those who think to obtain salvation in any other way than what God has appointed; in the way of sloth and indolence, self-confidence and self-righteousness, or of uncovenanted mercy. God's way of salvation is opposite to this: it is by humility and self-abasement, repentance and faith, and perseverance to the end. Some are warm in their affections, and diligent in their pursuits for a time, but afterwards grow faint and weary: "Ye did run well, but what hath hindered you?" Such however will never gain the victory, nor win the prize. If men were left to themselves, either in a natural or renewed state; and if God were not to work, or to withhold his hand after he had begun to work, none would be saved, no not one. Neither the sinner nor the saint are able to save themselves. The foundation must be laid, and the top-stone brought forth with shoutings, Grace, grace unto it!——More particularly,

1. Such shall be saved as are appointed to it. Of some it is said, "God hath chosen them to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth." The means and the end are united in the event, and also in the divine decree. However the doctrine of election may have been ridiculed and opposed, it is nevertheless a doctrine according to godli-

ness, and agreeable to the whole current of scripture; "Whom God did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified." This chain of blessings begins with predestination and ends with glorification, and the connexion between them shall never be broken. The Lord's counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure. But let none be tempted from hence to cast off all care about their souls, under a *pretence* of leaving all to God; for remember, that as none are saved without the divine decree, so none shall be saved merely in virtue of such a decree; none would neglect their bodies under a pretence that it is appointed how long they shall live, and therefore none ought to neglect their souls under a similar pretence, that it is determined whether or not they shall be saved. 2 Thess. ii. 13. Rom. viii. 30.

2. Those shall be saved who are truly desirous of it. None are willing till they are made so in the day of God's power, and he that hath wrought in us the desire of salvation will bring us to the possession of it. *Spiritual* desires are the effect of grace, and grace is the forerunner of glory. As sinners we do not deserve salvation, and being such we do not desire it. The salvation of Christ consists in a freedom from sin as well as from wrath, and a conformity to him as well as the enjoyment of him; and where this is truly the object of desire there is an evidence of interest, and an earnest of the possession. We can be saved only in God's way, and if we be willing to be so saved, we shall be saved. In this respect he dispenses his blessings not only according to his own will, but according to ours also. "He satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness." All spiritual blessings are given in answer to desire; and the language of the Saviour still is, "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?—If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink—Let him that is athirst, come; and who-

soever will, let him take the water of life freely—Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." Psal. cvii. 9. Matt. v. 6. Rev. xxii. 17.

3. Those who come to Christ for salvation shall be sure to obtain it. "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," is still the language of the compassionate Saviour. Coming to him implies coming off from every other foundation and away from every other refuge; a submitting to him as our Lord, taking his yoke upon us; an imitation of his example, so as to learn of him; and a closing in with him as the only Saviour, renouncing every other. It implies faith; for "he that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life:" he is as certain of it as if he already possessed it. It also implies obedience; for Christ is "the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him." Those who receive him into their hearts he will receive into heaven, and those who are subject to him in this world shall reign with him in the next. Matt. xi. 28. John iii. 36. Heb. v. 9.

4. Such as endure to the end shall be saved. Many set out that do not hold out: they run well for a time, but are afterwards hindered; begin in the spirit, and end in the flesh. "But if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him, saith the Lord." It is the persevering saint only that shall be crowned at last. The inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, is reserved for those who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, and such only shall be brought to the possession of it. Believers are pressing towards the mark, and shall win the prize: they fight the good fight of faith, and shall be made more than conquerors through him that hath loved them. By patient continuance in well doing, they seek for glory, honour, and immortality, and shall have eternal life. Rom. ii. 7.

To conclude: Are there few that shall be saved? Let it stir us up to the most serious concern, to see whether we be of the happy number. And if it be through much difficulty that any are saved, this calls for diligent application and holy resolution in seeking eternal life, "giving all diligence to make our calling and election sure." Strive to enter in at the straight gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able." Many seek faintly, but do you seek earnestly: they seek in their own strength, but do you go in the strength of the Lord God: they seek for a time only, but do you seek perseveringly, until you obtain that which you seek after. Some have been inclined to seek for happiness, like Balaam; but like him, they have come short of it. Yet no one that seeks him aright shall be disappointed. "He hath not said unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain—If thou shalt seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart, and with all thy soul." Deut. iv. 29. Isai. xlv. 19.

Let those who have obtained the first-fruits and *foretastes* of this salvation, beware of self-confidence and self-sufficiency, depending on Him who is both the author and finisher of faith. Go forth in his strength, making mention of his righteousness, and of that only. Let him that hath done the work have the full, the final glory. Say with the church of old, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath cloathed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness." Isai. lxi. 10.

SERMON XIV.

Acts xi. 23.

Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of Go was glad.

The occasion of these words, and the manner which they are introduced, may be learned from tl context. The persons in whom the grace of God w seen, were the new converts at Antioch, and the pe son who saw it was Barnabas, who had been sent l the church at Jerusalem to know the certainty of tl report concerning them, and to strengthen them in tl ways of the Lord. The interview to him was high satisfactory, and to them it was no less profitabl "He saw the grace of God, and was glad, and exhort them all, that with purpose of heart they would clea unto the Lord."

By "the grace of God" in scripture, is general meant his favour to the unworthy, in opposition merit or desert. It supposes that God is under constraint in exercising mercy, and that man has claims upon him. It is the only source of all t great things that are done for us in this world, a of all the blessings we shall enjoy in the next. Tl grace is displayed in our regeneration, sanctificatio and preservation; and when its subjects are co pletely glorified, grace will be fully satisfied. Fai is necessary to salvation, but does not lessen its fre ness, for that also is matter of free favour. "] grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not

yourselves, it is the gift of God. Not of works, lest any man should boast." (Ephes. ii. 8, 9.)—Grace is sometimes put for the effect of God's free favour towards us, and is so to be understood in our text. Considering it as the original cause of our salvation, it is grace in the fountain: in its operations, it is grace in the stream: grace in the principle, and in the product. In both respects it is absolutely free, without money and without price. It prevents our deserts and endeavours, and far exeeds our highest hopes.

Let us proceed to notice two things principally arising from the words before us—namely, that where true grace is, it will be seen—and, that the appearance of it in others is matter of joy to christians, especially to faithful ministers.

I. Where the grace of God is, it will be seen.

Like its divine author, grace is in its own nature invisible, but is manifest by its effects. It is a seed that springs up, a light that shines, a fire that burns. It illuminates the understanding, subdues the will, and sanctifies the heart. It forms the christian temper, makes men meek and humble, spiritual and holy. It restrains the passions, opposes sin, and will at length destroy it. It changes the sinner into a saint, and the hypocrite into a true believer. The christian life is a hidden one with respect to its principles and spring, but visible in its fruits and effects. Those who truly receive the gospel are described as "holding forth the word of life," as living "epistles, known and read of all men." They bear the image of the Saviour, and are a transcript of the truth believed. One reason, perhaps, why this holy principle is called grace is, that it beautifies and adorns those who are the subjects of it, and renders them truly graceful. It is also an abiding principle, an incorruptible seed, a well of living water springing up into everlasting life. Like the root of the righteous,

it shall not be moved: those who do not possess it ma fall away, but those who do, shall endure to the end and be saved.—More particularly observe how th grace of God may be seen in those who are the subject of it.

1. Sometimes it may be seen even in the countenance. The scriptures take notice of the "haughtiness" of the wicked, their "high looks," and "th pride of their countenance," as indications of the corruption that reigns within. "Pride and arrogance and the froward mouth, do I hate, saith the Lord." Yet these things may be seen in the conduct and appearance of wicked men, so that not only their speech but their very countenances betray them. The same may be said of the righteous, especially those who are eminently so, and who enjoy much communion with God. We may generally discover something in the looks which indicates the state of the heart; a deep seriousness mixed with sweet serenity, which is both impressive and attractive. Thus when Moses had been in the mount with God, the intimate converse and heavenly discoveries which he experienced had such a transforming influence on the inward man, that they imparted a dignity and a lustre to his outward appearance. Moses himself "wist not that the skin of his face shone; but Aaron and all the children of Israel beheld it, and were afraid to come nigh him, and he put a veil on his face until he had done speaking with them." Much the same is observed of the martyr Stephen, when addressing the Jewish council: "Looking steadfastly on him, they saw his face as it had been the face of an angel." The admiring Saviour also seems to discover something of this holy beauty in all his people; for when speaking to the church of old, he says "Sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely." A peaceful conscience makes a cheerful heart and placid countenance. This has been particularly remarked of many godly people in their expiring

moments: they have smiled in death, and even seemed to smile after death; so that you might look upon them and say, God is with them, and they are now with God. Exod. xxxiv. 29. Acts vi. 15.

2. The grace of God will be discovered in their conversation. It was said of Peter, "Thy speech betrayeth thee; and the same may be said of every christian. Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh; and if our minds be suitably occupied with heavenly things, we cannot forbear to speak of them. Men of the world love to be talking of the things which concern them, and christians cannot but speak of the things which they have seen and heard: we believe, say they, and therefore have we spoken. Grace will make our conversation serious and savory, spiritual and affectionate, tending to godly edifying, and ministering instruction to the hearers. When the Holy Spirit was poured out on the day of Pentecost, the disciples began to speak with other tongues; and so shall we, if we partake in any measure of the same anointing. We shall be redeemed from our vain conversation, and shall put away foolish jesting, and filthy communication out of our mouth, which is not convenient. Our speech will be seasoned with grace, and others will take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus. This was the case, no doubt, with the converts at Antioch. It was the time of their espousals, and their hearts were inflamed with zeal and inspired with love. They were conveyed as it were into a new world, and they spake freely of the change that had been wrought in them. The Lord had turned to them a pure language, and touched their lips with a live coal from off the altar, and now they speak no longer the language of Ashdod, but that of Canaan. By this it would be seen in whose school they had been taught, and whose disciples they were. "Ye know the man;" said one, "and his communication;" and real believers may be known by their aptness to teach

and learn the things pertaining to the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus. "O Lord, thy saints shall bless thee! They shall speak of the glory of the kingdom, and talk of thy power, to make known to the sons of men his mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of his kingdom." Psal. cxlv. 10—12.

3. It may be seen in their conduct and deportment. Those that fear the Lord hate evil; they hate every false way. Of such as sorrow for sin after a godly sort it is said, "What carefulness it wrought *in you*, yea, what clearing of yourselves; yea, what vehement desire; yea, what zeal!" Grace will discover itself by causing us to delight in prayer and public ordinances, in love to the house of God and his people, in the choice of our companions, meekness under provocations, patience under afflictions, contentment with the allotments of providence, liberality to the poor, deadness to the world, and breathings after heaven. If any one receive the grace of God in truth, it will be seen by those about him, in the temper of his mind and in the tenor of his life: there will be a real change, from darkness to light, from sin to holiness, from earth to heaven. He has not only renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, but is careful to maintain good works for necessary uses. He not only talks against sin, but forsakes it; and not only discourses of religion, but practises it. He walks not after the flesh, but after the spirit; and can say with David, "I delight to do thy will, O God; thy law is within my heart."—Observing these things in the converts at Antioch, rendered the visit of Barnabas so gratifying, and furnished him with pleasing tidings to his fellow labourers.—This leads us to the next part of our subject—

II. The appearance of the grace of God in others is matter of joy to christians, especially to faithful ministers.

Barnabas was only a visitor at Antioch, and had not en the instrument of this great work; it was effected iefly by the preaching of the men of Cyprus and rene; yet he rejoices in it, and afterwards abides th them, and much people were still added unto the ord. He rejoiced on their account who had received grace of God, on his account who bestowed it, d also on his own account, as affording a prospect success in his future labours among them. More rticularly,

1. It was matter of joy that these persons were come real christians, and not such in name and arance only. They had been Jews or heathens; but d now embraced the gospel, and received it in love. is pleasing to see persons amiable in their dispotion, kind in their conduct, prosperous in their cirmstances, and useful in society: but all this may be here there is no true religion. The great thing is to the grace of God in them, to see Christ formed in em the hope of glory, to see them made meet for the ngdom of heaven: for in all this we see the accomishment of God's purposes, and the travail of the deemer's soul, wherewith he shall be satisfied. Nothing short of this would satisfy him, nor should ny thing else satisfy us. Ministers may be approved nd applauded, may have many friends and enjoy a rge portion of esteem; but if souls are not converted, it will avail them but little, and their labour will be st. They are sent to open men's eyes, to turn them rom darkness to light, and from the power of Satan nto God; and if these ends be not answered, they bour in vain. Hence an apostle could say of such had received the word in much affliction, and with oy in the Holy Spirit, "What is our hope, our joy, r crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy." 1 Thes. ii. 19, 20.

2. They were such as had appeared openly for

Christ, as well as truly believed on him. In primitive times indeed these things went together: with the heart they believed unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession was made unto salvation. When any gave themselves to the Lord, they also gave themselves to his people according to his will. They were not ashamed of the gospel, nor terrified by the prospect of sufferings: they not only knew the Lord, but confessed him before men. This also is a matter of joy to God's servants. It is like collecting *additional* votes for the Saviour, or the coming up of fresh troops to join the army of the Lamb. It cheers the friends of truth, and inspires them with fresh courage in their attacks on the kingdom of darkness. It is by little and little that the leaven shall spread: first, "one shall say, I am the Lord's;" and then, "another shall surname himself by the name of Jacob;" and after that "another shall subscribe his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel." And thus the work shall go on by slow degrees until the whole earth be full of his glory. Every addition that is made therefore to the church of Christ is matter of joy to his people, as they hereby see the fulfilment of the promises, and the coming of that kingdom which shall never be moved.

3. The converts at Antioch appear to have been eminent in their profession, as well as sincere, and this also was matter of joy to Barnabas. Amidst the innumerable imperfections which obscure the character of multitudes of professors, you can see but little of the grace of God, even while you hope it does exist. There is so much worldly-mindedness, coldness in religion, deadness and formality, that you stand in doubt and can scarcely ascertain whether there be any good thing in them towards the Lord God of Israel; and at any time you rejoice in some hopeful appearance it is with trembling. But here the grace of God was to be clearly seen: not only Barnabas, but the in

habitants of the city could see it too. They saw so much of the spirit and of the doctrine of Christ in these converts, that they called them "Christians," and they were the first who obtained that honourable appellation. (ver. 26.) They adorned the religion they professed, and were trees of God's right hand planting, being filled with all the fruits of righteousness. They were not only established in the truth, but zealous of good works; so that Barnabas could take the same satisfaction in them as John did in his beloved Gaius. "I rejoiced greatly when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth." 3 John 3.

Reflections.

(1.) If believers may see the grace of God in others, why not in themselves? That which is an evidence of grace in one is so in another, and yet it often happens that what we see in others we cannot see in ourselves, though others cannot see it in us. But we know more of our own defects than others can know of us, and therefore it is that we are more doubtful of the good that may be in us: yet we should do ourselves the justice to consider that as an evidence of grace which we allow to be so in another. "Let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another." Gal. vi. 4.

(2.) If our seeing the grace of God in this world be matter of joy, what will it be hereafter, when its work shall be completed, and every imperfection be done away! If the first-fruits be so sweet, what will be the harvest? The church is now fair as the moon, but then it will be clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners. "The ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." Isai. xxxv. 10.

SERMON XV.

Rom. viii. 37.

In all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

The character here given to Christ is that which distinguishes him from all others; for he only hath loved us. Others may indeed have loved us; but no one ever did or can love like him, and all other love is such as scarcely deserves the name. "Herein is love! Not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Paul does not speak of Christ by name, but of "Him that loved us," as if there were no other who deserved that character, and as if all other friendships were lost in this. And of all the properties ascribed to the Saviour, his love is the most wonderful, the most distinguishing, and the most endearing. This it is that raises the admiration of the saints on earth—"Who loved me, and gave himself for me." And this it is that fills the joy and triumph of the redeemed above—"Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

In the verse preceding the text, the apostle sets forth the difficulties and dangers to which the followers of Christ are exposed. "As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are counted as

sheep for the slaughter." Then it follows, "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors;" not only in the things just before mentioned, but in all other things, some of which occur in the former parts of this chapter. We are more than conquerors: but neither the victory nor the glory are to be ascribed to us: it is "through him that loved us." Rev. i. 3.

I. Christians are described as Conquerors.

A conqueror is one that overcomes and gains the victory, and this supposes a conflict, or striving for the mastery. So there are several circumstances in the christian life in which he is thus engaged, and in which he is crowned with victory.

1. Christians are made conquerors at their first conversion, when through grace they obtain deliverance from the power of darkness and unbelief. Then it is that a portion is divided with the great. and the spoil with the strong. Then it is that our captive souls are in a good measure freed from the bondage of sin and Satan: the strong man's house is spoiled, and the armour in which he trusted. Then it is that the conflict begins which will be sure to end in the believer's triumph; and which lays the foundation for glory and renown. So sure was the apostle of this that he speaks of it as already obtained: "Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." He sounds a triumph before the battle was over, which was an instance of strong faith, but well supported. 1 Cor. xv. 57.

2. When grace gains the ascendancy, and particular corruptions are weakened and subdued. Growing christians are going on conquering and to conquer: others may hope for the victory, but these have already obtained it. Partial advantages give assurance of a final conquest. Heaven is begun where temptation is resisted, and the enemy made to flee before us.

Though the Canaanites dwell in the land, and the war is not all over; yet they are subdued by little and little, and shall finally be exterminated. The conflict may be sharp, but it will be short, and the rest shall be everlasting. "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under our feet shortly." Rom. xvi. 20.

3. Believers are conquerors at a throne of grace. God fulfils their requests, and often exceeds them, as he did those of Solomon. He asked for wisdom, and obtained both wisdom and honour. Paul sought deliverance from present affliction, and gained a promise of grace and strength to support him under all his future trials. By his tears and supplications, Jacob had power both with God and man, and prevailed. Prayer has removed judgments when God has begun to inflict them, and obtained mercies when he seemed unwilling to bestow them. As this is the sweetest way of conversing with God, so it is also the most effectual way of prevailing with him. "It is not fit," said the Saviour, "to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs." "Truth, Lord," replied the woman of Canaan; "yet the dogs may eat of the crumbs that fall from their master's table." To which he answered, "O woman, great is thy faith! be it unto thee even as thou wilt." Thou art set upon having the blessing, and thou shalt have it: take what thou askest, yea, all that thou wantest. Matt. xv. 22—28.

4. Believers overcome the afflictions and trials of the present life, and such as they are called especially to endure for Christ's sake, and so are conquerors. The apostles and primitive christians were not only supported under the persecutions and distresses which they were called to endure, but they could say, "Not only so, but we glory in tribulations also." They were "strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness." Such was their constancy in suffering that they overcame even their very persecutors, who

seemed more weary in inflicting torments than they were in enduring them. There is indeed a happy way of overcoming enemies, by acts of kindness and beneficence, returning good for evil, and blessing for cursing, and this the scripture calls a "heaping coals of fire upon their heads." This will sometimes soften their hard hearts, and melt them into love. When this is the case, the conquest is truly glorious: it is a conquest obtained over them and ourselves also: and "he that is slow to anger, is better than the mighty, and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city." Prov. xvi. 32. Col. i. 11.

5. The saints are conquerors in a dying hour. The victory then obtained is great and glorious, complete and everlasting. The enemy then subdued will rise up no more, nor will any other rise up after it. "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death," and when this is overcome the warfare is finished. The christian will then put off his armour, and put on his crown. Conquerors in other battles are called out to fresh engagements, and the hero who triumphs one day may be triumphed over the next: but it is not so with the christian hero. There are no fresh conflicts after this, and no danger of defeat: being once dead, he dieth no more. He rests from his labours, and his works shall follow him. "When this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, "Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law: but thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Cor. xv. 54—57.

II. Christians are not only conquerors, but more than conquerors.

They not only overcome their enemies, but triumph over them, and their triumph will be perpetual. They not only conquer, but shall for ever enjoy the fruits of their conquest. Their victories began at the time they first believed, were multiplied as they advanced, and shall be completed at death. No earthly hero ever had such success, or gained so many battles, or shall be crowned with so much glory. They are "more than conquerors."

1. They conquer those enemies which none besides can conquer, and which to all others would be invincible. They overcome those powers of darkness which have overcome the world. By the shield of faith they repel the fiery darts of the wicked one, and make the fiery serpent himself to flee away. Those who have obtained the greatest victories are often the slaves of the basest lusts: they have overcome others, but are themselves overcome of pride and ambition, of lawless and brutal appetites. But the christian triumphs over himself; and while he is waging war with the corruptions that are in the world, he is no less successful in his opposition to that depravity which reigns within. This is a rational victory, and much more honourable than that which is gained by force of arms. Believers overcome their pride, impatience, and discontent; set bounds to their impetuous desires, and mortify their inbred corruptions and lusts: they quell the insurrection at home, as well as resist the invasion from abroad; and this is as necessary, though more difficult than the other. They conquer that by which all are conquered, even death: thus they lead captivity captive, and receive meat out of the eater, and sweetness out of the strong.

2. The means by which they overcome are such as enhance the glory of their conquests. When kings go forth to battle they muster the host, calculate their numbers, and oppose force to force. But when David meets Goliah, inequality of strength is disregarded,

and he prepares himself only with a sling and a stone: the defeat of such an enemy, and by such means, renders the victory more brilliant. So in the christian warfare, "it is not by might, nor by power; but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." They overcome not by their own strength, but by the strength of another. "I can do all things," said Paul, "through Christ who strengtheneth me;" and in this respect the meanest christian is equal to the greatest apostle. "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities," said the same inspired hero, "that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong." This is indeed to be more than a conqueror: it is to enjoy a victory without labour, and to reap the fruits of it without going forth to battle. The Lord fights for his people, and they have only to stand still and see his salvation. Every other battle is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood: but here is no noise, for in quietness and confidence is our strength. The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God, and through him we shall do valiantly. "By thee have I run through a troop, and by my God have I leaped over a wall." Christ's little army is often attacked by him who deceiveth the whole world; but the accuser shall be cast down, and they shall overcome him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony. Psal. xviii. 29. Isai. xxx. 1. 1 Cor. xii. 9, 10. Rev. xii. 11.

3. There is also something in the manner in which they overcome that makes them more than conquerors. They are sure of success beforehand, which no other combatants are. Amongst men the uncertainty of the issue makes war dreadful: but those who enlist under the banner of Christ are assured that they shall dip their foot in the blood of their enemies, and return

laden with the spoils of victory. They also conquer i a little time: when God concurs and grace assists, th work is soon done. The sound of an alarm is quickl followed by the sound of triumph. The conflict ma continue as long as life: but what is our life? i is but a vapour. Besides, continued resistance wil weaken the hands of our enemies and strengthen our so that the conquest shall be easy, and obtained wit little loss. A victory is often dearly purchased: muc blood is shed, and the lives of many valiant men ar lost. But the christian loses nothing that is worth retaining: he gains by every battle. God hath taugh his hands to war, and his fingers to fight, and experience gives him more wisdom, more strength, mor courage, more knowledge of his enemies, and also o himself, so that he is more fit for new achievements. He not only keeps his standing, but gains ground, and his graces are improved by exercise. As his sufferings abound, so his consolations abound also; and the more vigorously he is opposed, the more firm and resolute he becomes. In the furnace of affliction he loses the dross, and retains the gold: in death he loses earth, and gains heaven.

4. The victory obtained is over and above measure, as the word here used signifies, and therefore they are more than conquerors. The victory is exceedingly great and glorious, far beyond what is accomplished in any other warfare. Believers are conquerors by right, before they become so in fact; and when they are so in fact, it is in a manner so complete and decisive as to leave no room for farther contest. It is not like a drawn battle, in which both sides may claim the advantage: the defeat is total, and the enemy is "swallowed up in victory." The conqueror rises, never to fall, and the enemy falls to rise no more. We do not outlive our successes, but renew them; nor lose our conquests after we have gained them, but go on con-

quering to the end. Though sometimes discouraged, we are not utterly cast down, and though faint, yet pursuing. Even our partial losses and miscarriages tend to our advantage, and we may be said to conquer even when we seem to be conquered. Paul does not say we *shall* be conquerors sometime or other, but that we *are* so, and that not only in this or the other instance, but "in all these things;" in all our temptations, afflictions and trials; in those things which are most difficult to be endured, and which are hard to flesh and blood. Though disabled, disarmed, or even killed, yet we shall conquer. Others may fall into the same trials, but none ever come out of them like the christian. We must remember, however, that all our successes are owing to Him that hath loved us: they are effected by his powerful assistance, and are the fruit of his favour towards us. "The Lord stood by me, and strengthened me," said Paul. "By this I know that thou favourest me," said David, "because mine enemy doth not triumph over me." His word directs and animates, and his presence communicates a kind of omnipotence to the saints. "Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world." Christ in us is the pledge of conquest, and the hope of glory. Psal. xli. 4. 2 Tim. iv. 7. 1 John iv. 4.

Improvement.

(1.) Let not believers be dismayed at any opposition they may meet with. "A troop may overcome them, but they shall overcome at last." Does the world molest, or Satan exult over the christian? Even out of the dust he may lift up his head, and say, "Rejoice not over me, O mine enemy; for when I fall, I shall arise." The strong expression in our text is well adapted to excite strong confidence, and the believer may sing with the Psalmist, "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is

the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afr
Though an host should encamp against me, my l
shall not fear; though war should rise up against
in this will I be confident." Psal. xxvii. 1—3.

(2.) The most successful christian should take
of pride and self-sufficiency. Let him say with
apostle, "Not I, but Christ who dwelleth in
We are but striplings at best in the field of battle.
have no might or power of our own to encounte
great multitude that is coming up against us:
Jesus is a great king, against whom there is no ri
up. The best of men, if left to themselves, woul
in a very unsafe condition. Our conquest over
Satan, death and hell, is not by any policy or p
that we can exercise, but by the abounding gra
our Lord Jesus Christ. The comforts arising fro
hopes of victory belong to us, but the crown mus
placed on the Redeemer's head, and let him that
rieth, glory in the Lord. If we are conquerors,
more than conquerors, it is only through Him
hath loved us. The ransomed of the Lord shall re
to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon
heads: the days of their mourning shall be ended,
their warfare shall be accomplished. May it be
happiness to join their society, and swell the triu
of that day!

SERMON XVI.

2 Pet. iii. 14.

diligent, that ye may be found of him in peace.

: generality of mankind are forming a thousand inary schemes of happiness, eagerly pursuing ' inviting prospect, and gadding about to change way as often as they meet with disappointment. he good man is a man of one business: his heart, the needle touched by the magnet, tends to one ; his affections and desires are towards one t; his resolutions and endeavours terminate in nd—to "be found of God in peace."

*O*bserve, that whatever be our state or character, all all be found of God. If we are sinners, and nd die such, our sins will find us out. Wicked may be very unwilling to be found of God, but cannot avoid it. His eyes are as a flame of fire, trating the inmost recesses of the soul, and the ess and the light are both alike to him. His arm, mnipotent and outstretched arm, reaches from one of the world, from one end of the universe, to er. He hides his people now in the secret of his ion, and will hereafter hide them in the grave, e that hides will find. "Thou shalt call, and I answer thee: thou wilt have a desire to the work y hands." Wicked men may seek to hide them- s in the caverns of the rocks, or call on moun- to fall on them and hide them from the face of

Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath the Lamb. But it is all in vain: "The mountai quake at him, and the hills melt, and the earth is bur at his presence, yea, the world, and all that dwe therein. Who can stand before his indignation; a who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? H fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are throv down by him." Though they bury themselves in t centre of the earth, yet they shall be dragged out fro thence, to meet that justice and endure that wra which they have dared to despise. "Though they d into hell, thence shall my hand take them; thou they climb up to heaven, thence will I bring the down: and though they hide themselves in the top Carmel, I will search and take them out from thence. Amos ix. 2, 3. Nahum i. 5, 6.

2. As all will be found of God at last, so there a some who will be "found of him in peace." Su as have had the enmity of their hearts slain by divi grace, and who have cordially embraced the gospe are in a state of reconciliation and friendship with Go and through the atoning sacrifice of Christ he is peace with them. This it is that heightens eve other blessing, alleviates every affliction, and suppor in the agonies of death. "Being justified by faith, w have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. As is our faith, so will be our peace: if faith be fir and strong, our peace will be so too; but if faith b weak and fluctuating, our peace will be the same. our faith be counterfeit, our peace will be so too: an if we have no faith at all, we shall be strangers to peac altogether. "I create the fruit of the lips; Peac peace to him that is far off, and to him that is nea saith the Lord, and I will heal him. But the wicke are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whos waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, sait my God, to the wicked."—Peace is a welcome blessin at any time; but how much more so in the last day

:n, when the world shall be on fire, and the elements
t with fervent heat, when the wicked shall be
ren to the utmost confusion and distress, when
ocrites shall be detected, and a public and final
tence passed on all mankind—to be found of him in
ce will be of more value than ten thousand worlds.
Lord grant unto us the blessing which Paul prayed
on behalf of his friend Onesimus; "that we may
l mercy of the Lord in that day!" Isai. lvii. 19—
Rom. v. i. 1 Tim. i. 18.

In order to be found in peace at last, it is needful
t we seek it here with diligence. Let us carefully
mine into the state of our souls. The psalmist com-
ned with his heart on his bed, and his spirit within
made diligent search. Be solicitous to know how
ters stand between God and you. See that a foun-
ion be laid for spiritual comfort in a thorough con-
ion of sin and hatred to it: a broken and contrite
rt is the divine abode. Having devoted yourselves
God, exert all your powers and employ all your
nts in his service. Occupy till he come, and then
coming will be neither a terror nor surprise.
tch against sloth and indolence, vain confidence,
carnal security. Constantly attend the means of
e, imploring the divine blessing upon them, for
r growth and improvement in the things of God.
getting the things that are behind, and reaching
h unto those which are before, be pressing towards
mark. Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our
d and Saviour Jesus Christ. Never think that you
sufficiently weaned from the world, estranged from
r lusts, or conformed to God, till you get to heaven.
ou do not gain ground in religion, you will lose
and; and as religion declines, your comfort will
ine. "Wherefore, brethren, give diligence to
e your calling and election sure; for if ye do these
gs, ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be
istered unto you abundantly into the everlasting

kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Chri
2 Peter i. 10, 11.

Let us now enquire who they are that will be fc
of God in peace.

1. Those only whom God finds in this world,
brings into a state of grace. Our state by nature is
that of lost sheep, and our recovery is by the inte
sition of the good Shepherd, who came to seek an
save that which was lost. We should never seek l
if he did not first seek us; nor take one step in the
to heaven, if he did not take us by the hand, as he
Ephraim, and teach us to go. Our return to G
free and voluntary, but we act only by being a
upon. "It is God that worketh in us to will and t
of his good pleasure," and, "thou, Lord, hast wro
all our works in us." It is he that both seeks and fi
and leads us in the way that we ought to go. "T
shall come with weeping, and with supplications w
lead them—Behold I, even I, will both search my sh
and seek them out. As a shepherd seeketh out
flock in the day that he is among his sheep that
scattered, so will I seek out my sheep, and will del
them out of all places where they have been scatt
in the cloudy and dark day. I will seek that w
was lost, and bring again that which was driven a
and will bind up that which was broken, and
strengthen that which was sick. Jer. xxxi. 9. E
xxxiv. 11—16.

2. Those shall be found of God in peace whc
have found him. Those whom God seeks he al
finds, and those who seek aright will always find l
"I love them that love me, and they that seek
early shall find me." Some seek and find him ir
closet, some in the public assembly, and some on a
and dying bed. Some in their youth, and other
more advanced years: some find him at their first s
ing, and others after long waiting. But unless h
found of us here, we shall not be found of him in p

er day. If we do not find him as a friend and a
, he will find us as a judge and avenger. Job
med, " Oh that I knew where I might find him!"
ıd found him indeed many a time before, but those
ıave once found God will want to find him again
gain, and will therefore continually renew their
ı after him. Whereas " the wicked, through the
of their countenance, will not seek after God:
s not in all their thoughts." But remember, that
ıce from him in this world will be followed with
erlasting distance in the world to come. If we
' Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge
ways," he will also say to us, " Depart, ye cursed,
everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his
s."
Those only will be found of God in peace who
ıund in Christ. This is what Paul so earnestly
d: " That I may win Christ, and be found in
He saw that the day of wrath was coming, and
d for the city of refuge where he might be secure
the avenger of blood; to be found in the Re-
er's righteousness, that he might not appear naked
ıt day; to be united to him by faith, and repre-
l by him, that he might be justified and accepted
Judge of all the earth. He that is not found
ist can neither be admitted to communion with
here, nor to the enjoyment of him hereafter.
l is in Christ Jesus reconciling the world unto
lf: not imputing their trespasses unto them;"
ıt of Christ he is a consuming fire, and will both
e iniquity and punish for it. We cannot enter
ıeaven unless our debts be paid, and our hearts
ed; and Christ must do both the one and the
It is not for any service of our own that we
cepted; but if we be accepted at all it must be
Beloved. So that whether found in honour or
ce, in poverty or affluence, unless found in
, we are miserable. The Divine Being might

say of such, as the prophet did concerning the king Israel, " Were it not that I regard the presence Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, I would not lo toward thee, nor see thee."

4. Those only will be found of him in peace in wh some good thing is found towards the Lord God Israel. Some have nothing good in them, either wards God or man: they please not God, and i contrary to all men. Others have something good them towards mankind; they are kind and courteo just and liberal; but are destitute of love to G True religion however is something good in us, wards him, bearing affection towards his holy na and making his glory our ultimate end. It is t in-wrought principle of holiness without which inclinations will be always evil, and our services acceptable. Our nature must be renewed, the div image restored, corruption must be mortified, and incorruptible seed sown in the heart, or there can no well-grounded hope of future peace. We must meetened before we can be admitted into the presen chamber of the great King; " for without holiness man shall see the Lord." Nothing short of the n birth can qualify us for the new Jerusalem: " Exc a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he can enter into the kingdom of God." Heaven is a h place, and must have holy inhabitants. He who p pares mansions for us above must also prepare us them. Christ must reign in the heart to fit us for h ven, as well as suffer upon the cross to procure hea for us. " Blessed are the undefiled in the way, w walk in the law of the Lord: blessed are they that k his testimonies, and that seek him with the wh heart." Psal. cxix. 1, 2.

5. Those only will be found of God in peace wh he finds walking in the paths of peace. Religion d not so much consist in talking of God as in act for him, not in theory but in practice. God's o

nt children only are his pleasant and beloved ones. will render to every man according to his works. Blessed," says Christ, "is that servant whom his rd when he cometh shall find so doing;" doing as Lord would have him, making God's word his ly rule, and the divine glory his great end in all he es. Watching, praying, running, striving, in the ercise of every grace and the discharge of every ty, in all wisdom and prudence, diligently persevering the end, and when he has done all, confessing withief and shame that he is an unprofitable servant. lvation is not indeed "of him that willeth, nor of n that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy;" t it is for such that mercy is provided, and in this ly that it is exercised. "David, after he had served generation by the will of God, fell asleep:" he pt in Jesus, and was found in peace. Grace is eparative to glory, and good works are an evidence grace. There may be other evidences; but if this wanting, our profession, however splendid, will ove a delusion, and our brightest hopes end in ame and disappointment. Good works are declara- e of a justified state, though not the cause of justi- ation. Obedience is necessary, though not merito- us. "Enoch walked with God, and he was not, God took him." The promises are made to such, d therefore such only have a right to expect the essing. "Blessed are they that do his command- nts, that they may have right to the tree of life, d may enter in through the gates into the city." v. xxii. 14.

IMPROVEMENT.

(1.) The subject administers reproof to the careless, o content themselves with some faint and sluggish tempts, but who are never in earnest about salva- n. Strange infatuation! to be anxious for the trifles a day, and indifferent about the all-important con- rns of eternity! To strive to be rich, and not strive

to be truly happy; to court the applause of men, an be unconcerned about the favour of God. Egregiou folly! to gain the whole world, if possible, and los our own souls!

(2.) We may hence learn that it is possible fo persons to be satisfied about themselves, and to hav a kind of peace in their own minds, and yet not b found of God in peace. This was the case with th Laodiceans, who thought themselves increased i goods, and had need of nothing, and knew not tha they were wretched, and miserable, and blind, an naked. "Woe to them that are at ease in Zion!" It were better to have no peace at all than a false one Disappointed hope will turn to aggravated misery On the other hand, it is possible for persons to b very doubtful of their state, and even much distresse about it, and yet be found of God in peace at las The gloomy darkness of the day is sometimes followe by a bright evening. "At eventide it shall be light. Or if the sun set in a cloud, it may rise on the oth side the horizon with greater splendour. Some wh knew but little of holy joy in their life-time, have a death entered into the joy of their Lord. The days o their mourning have been ended, and God has becom their glory.

(3.) We see the suitableness and importance of th advice given us in the text: "Be diligent, that y may be found of him in peace." How awful will t the day of judgment, if not found in peace! And t be thus found is a blessing that will more than com pensate all our pains and labour in order to obtain i To be found in peace, what is it but to escape fro hell, and be admitted into heaven; to be delivere from the tormenting power of Satan, and received int the embraces of God! How should this excite ou desires, animate our endeavours, enliven our hope inflame our zeal, and set the whole soul in motion to wards heaven!

SERMON XVII.

Acts xvi. 14.

Whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.

Though the Lord's people are thinly scattered, and sometimes throughout large cities, yet they have a way of finding one another out. True religion serves as a sort of magnet to draw their hearts together, and those who were strangers before, now become friends and associates. After abiding certain days at Philippi, Paul found that prayer was wont to be made out of the city by the river side, and thither therefore he resorted to preach the gospel. "And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul." Whether Lydia had been a true worshipper or not, she from this time worshipped God in spirit and in truth, and became a follower of the Lord Jesus.

Considering the text as descriptive of true conversion, I shall offer a few remarks on the nature of the change denoted by the Lord's opening the heart.

1. It is a divine work, a work which God performs, and which none else can perform. It is said of the skill of the husbandman in opening the clods, casting abroad the fitches and cummin, the barley and principal wheat, that "his God doth instruct him." How

much more in breaking up the fallow ground of the sinner's heart, and sowing the incorruptible seed of the kingdom! "This cometh forth from the Lord of hosts, who is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working." The heart is naturally shut: sin is shut in, and Christ shut out. Prejudice, perverseness, and enmity are the bars and bolts that keep it shut; and as Satan has his strong hold there, his efforts will not be wanting to render it still more inaccessible. There is a dreadful contrariety in the heart to God and all that is good, nor will any thing short of a divine agency be sufficient to subdue and overcome it. Ministers may knock at the door, but it is God alone that can open it. He deals with these bolts and bars which shut him out, as Sampson did with those that shut him in. Is it locked, and double locked? He has a key that fits every ward. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." He that will open our graves can open our hearts. His word is like the fire that melteth, and the hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces. Where this change takes place, it may be said with wonder and gratitude, "What hath God wrought!" The excellency of the work, and the difficulties attending it, shew that it is of God. "Whose heart the Lord opened."

2. It is God's first work, that which is descriptive of true conversion. Transient impressions, partial convictions, and powerful restraints, are common to all; but the opening of the heart is the effect of special grace, and the commencement of true religion. This is the breaking forth of divine love, the exertion of saving power, and the dawn of sovereign mercy. Till then there are no holy desires put forth, no duties rightly performed, and no spiritual comforts experienced. Previous to this the soul is wholly dead in trespasses and sins; and now it is that the Lord passes by the sinner, whilst he is yet in his blood, and says to him, Live! That Christ was born in Bethlehem and

suffered on mount Calvary, is good news to perishing sinners: but until he is admitted into the heart, they lie under the curse, and are exposed to the wrath to come. Christ in the gospel lays the foundation of a sinner's hope; but it must be Christ in you that gives existence to the hope of glory. All months before this change took place were months of vanity, and all days previous to this were days of evil. This is the day which the Lord hath made; let us rejoice and be glad *in it*. This is the great day in the christian's calendar, the most eventful period of his whole life. Then he began to live to some valuable purpose: then he became a visible member of Christ's mystical body, a son and heir of God.

3. The opening of the heart is an instantaneous work. It is done in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, without any previous exertions or endeavours, preparations or qualifications. In our apprehension it may be gradual, like Christ's opening the eyes of the blind man, who first saw men as trees walking, and afterwards, upon a fresh touch from his hand, all things clearly: but in itself the change is quick and powerful. The corrupt disposition is healed at once, as in the case of Zaccheus and Saul. Christ speaks but a word, and the one restores his ill-gotten goods; and the other, of a bitter persecutor, becomes a zealous apostle. The influences of the wind are sudden and surprising, and so are the operations of the Holy Spirit. A man goes into a place of worship an enemy to the truth, and comes out a true believer; and he who went from home a hardened sinner returns a humble penitent, and goes down to his house justified. God can with greater ease and dispatch open the heart to let in Christ, than a man can open his door to let in a friend or a visitor. If there be a stone at the mouth of the sepulchre, an angel can remove it, and if a mountain be placed before Zerubbabel, it shall become a plain.

4. Powerful as this work is, it is not effected violence, but in a way perfectly consistent with l man liberty. God opens the heart by engaging a inclining it to that which is good. The power is h but the act is our own. "Behold, I stand at t door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and op the door, I will come in to him and sup with hi and he with me." Men are not driven, but draw not forced against their will, but made willing. N thing can be more irresistible than God's call, an nothing more voluntary than the sinner's complian with it. Divine influence is not compulsive, but t tractive. "Behold, I will allure her, and bring h into the wilderness, and speak comfortably un her." "Draw me," says the church: "we will r after thee." Hence the operations of the Holy Spi on the heart, in a variety of instances, are scarce distinguishable from the workings of our own min and their truth and reality are chiefly to be asce tained by their effects. That a change is wrought the conversion of a sinner is evident, but the preci time and direct manner in which it is effected are u known. There are no dreadful terrors, no ravishin consolations, no noise of axes and hammers; but secret insinuation, a silent introduction of grace in the soul. God does not open the heart as men woul open a passage into a strongly-fortified place, b planting a battery against it; but by "putting in h hand by the hole of the door," and then "our bowe are moved for him." He enlightens the understand ing, and renews the affections, whereby the sinner di cerns his past folly, and is led to pursue his preser interest. Cant. i. 4. v. 5. Hos. ii. 14. Rev. iii. 2

5. It is an internal work, the opening of the hear It is true, the ears are opened to receive instructio the mouth is opened in prayer and praise, the hand are opened in acts of justice and benevolence, to re store to the injured and give to the needy, and th

eyes are opened to see the odious nature of sin, and the transcendent glory of the Saviour; but the opening of the heart is previous to all this, und is the cause of all these openings. God's first and principal work is to win the heart: the sinner's first and principal work is to give the heart to him. When this point is gained, all the rest will follow of course. "Thou desirest truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom." The heart of a sinner is the seat of every corruption: the heart of a saint is the residence of every grace. Out of the evil treasure of the one proceed evil things, and out of the good treasure of the other proceed good things. As is the heart, such will be the life: as are the inward dispositions, such will be the outward actions. Psal. li. 6.

6. Though the work itself is invisible, yet its effects are not so. Grace cannot be seen but by its fruits. Where the heart is changed, the conduct will be changed. New duties will result from new principles, and Christ's yoke, which before was thought to be burdensome, now becomes light and easy.—Three blessed effects of God's opening the heart of Lydia are here mentioned. (1.) "She attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul." She might have heard the gospel before, but now it is in a different manner. Her eyes were fixed on the preacher, her heart was raised to God, she hears with judgment and affection, desiring the sincere milk of the word that she may grow thereby. It comes not unto her in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance. (2.) She manifested her regard to the commands of our Saviour by being immediately baptized in the name of the Sacred Three in whom she had believed, and to whom she had now acknowledged obedience and subjection. This was the answer of a good conscience, and her alacrity shewed the fervour of her zeal. "I made haste and

delayed not to keep thy commandments." (3.) Her love to the brethren, especially those who had been the honoured instruments of her conversion. "If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord (says she), come into my house, and abide there: and she constrained them." No sooner had she received Christ into her heart than she received his friends into her house: one door being opened, the other did not remain shut. Perhaps she had been penurious and selfish before: now she is generous and hospitable: she had partook of their spiritual things, and was willing that they should partake of her carnal things. She would gladly feed the bodies of those who had so richly fed her soul. It was natural too for her, after having received the love of the truth, to seek the company and conversation of those who were so well able to instruct her in the things pertaining to the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus.

7. It is a work that shall be abiding: He openeth, and no man shutteth: he shutteth, and no man openeth. I know that what God doth shall be for ever, and it shall never be undone. When he effectually opens the sinner's heart, it shall not be shut again. The new creature is the noblest piece of his workmanship, and it shall not be destroyed. He will neither destroy it himself, nor suffer others to do it: no wisdom nor power can defeat his purposes, and he will not forsake the work of his own hands. When the heart is once opened, Christ takes possession of it, and says in effect, This is my rest: here will I dwell for ever, for I have desired it. He may seem to depart, but his departure is neither total nor final. He is faithful who hath said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Heb. xiii. 5.

8. The work we have been considering is absolutely necessary to salvation. As we cannot be saved without the death of Christ, so neither without the work of the Spirit.—More particularly, (1.) Satan, that un-

clean spirit, had usurped the dominion of our hearts, and it is necessary to put an end to his influence and deprive him of his power. The prey must be taken from the mighty, and the lawful captive delivered. There must be a pulling down of strong holds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringeth into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ, if ever we be saved. The spread of the gospel expelled Satan from the heathen temples, and the power of divine grace expels him from our heathenish hearts. (2.) Our souls must be cleansed and purified, and this is done by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost. Christ comes into our hearts by water for our sanctification, and by blood for our justification. Thus he came personally into the world, and thus he comes spiritually into the souls of his people. In this way he restores both peace and holiness; that image which sin had defaced, and that comfort which sin had destroyed. (3.) The heart must be opened in order to its being beautified and adorned with every grace, with integrity and humility, patience and temperance, charity and heavenly-mindedness. If when Christ puts in his hand by the hole of the door, the handles of the lock drop with sweet-smelling myrrh; how much more when he opens the door and enters in! Whereever he comes he brings with him a fulness of grace and truth. (4.) By all these means the Lord makes us a fit habitation for himself. Wisdom now enters into the heart, and knowledge is pleasant to the soul. Whatever Christ has done for us is now applied, and whatever he has purchased is brought home. He dwells in us, and we in him: he sups with us, and we with him. Adorable grace! Inexplicable mystery! Men of humour may deride the saints, men of power may persecute them, and their worst enemies may be those of their own household; but they have that

which will more than counterbalance all the evils t may either feel or fear. Christ is in them the founda of present peace, and the pledge of future glory.

Conclusion.

(1.) Let those consider their miserable condi whose hearts are still shut against the gospel and Saviour. God will one day shut you out of heav If you remain deaf to his calls, he will be deaf to y entreaties. If Christ be not in you the hope of gl Satan will be in you the prelude of misery. May blessed Saviour open his heart, his loving heart you, and open your hearts, your stubborn hearts him!

(2.) If there be any whose hearts the Lord h opened, let them assume nothing to themselves, give him all the glory. All the evil that is in u from ourselves, and all the good is from God alc "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us; but unto name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy tr sake."

In vain does Paul's persuasive tongue,
With arguments profound,
Diffuse among the list'ning throng,
The gospel's joyful sound.

Apollos, fam'd for eloquence,
Tries all his arts in vain;
Tho' sweet his voice, and strong his sense,
Sinners unchang'd remain.

Jesus, the work is wholly thine,
To form the soul anew;
And nothing short of grace divine
Can stubborn hearts subdue.

SERMON XVIII.

1 Peter i. 16.

Be ye holy, for I am holy.

e glory of the divine character consists in the ection of moral excellence; "Who is like unto , O Lord, among the gods? Who is like thee, ious in holiness?" It is this that sheds a lustre on his attributes, and constitutes the dignity of his lligent creatures. "O worship the Lord in the ities of holiness: fear before him all the earth."— iness, with respect to us, is not any one particular e in distinction from another; but the assem- e of all the graces, the sum of moral excellence. that which renders its subjects truly amiable, and mands a respect and veneration even from those are not possessed of it themselves. The inhabi- s of Canaan were often impressed with awe by the ence of the patriarchs who sojourned among them, wicked men still pay a kind of involuntary homage eal and eminent piety. It also attracts the eye heart of the compassionate Saviour: "Since wast precious in my sight, thou hast been ho- rable, and I have loved thee—Behold, thou art my love; behold, thou art fair." Holiness is honour of the church on earth, and its perfection eaven.

the foregoing verse the apostle had given this inent and comprehensive exhortation: "As he ch hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all

manner of conversation." The holiness here re
is universal, in the whole of our disposition a
haviour; not only in some instances, but in
thing, "in all manner of conversation:" in
in all our thoughts; outwardly, in all our a
both towards God and man. Not only talk o
ness, but follow it, in every station and connec
life; not only at particular times and seasons,
all times, and in all places; in the closet, in the
in the church, and in the world.—It is then
"Because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am
This seems to be a reference to Lev. xi. 44. W
see the harmony there is between the prophets
Old and the apostles of the New Testament
speak the same language, and mind the same
One inspired writer confirms what he says
testimony of other inspired writers, so that ou
mouth of two or three witnesses every word
established. Peter does not plead his own au
as an apostle, which he might have done, but
to the Scriptures as the standard of truth. W
see that the doctrine of Scripture is a doctrine
ding to godliness, and that its leading desig
promote it. One of the earliest patriarchs is
"a preacher of righteousness," and all right pr
will have the same tendency.

I. Explain the exhortation: "*Be ye holy*, f
holy."

1. Holiness may be considered as to its
What is it? It is, as we have already observ
sum of moral excellence, a participation of the
nature, a conformity to the divine image. I
in God is his perfect conformity to truth and
ousness, and in creatures it is a conformity
The understanding is enlightened in the knowl
the will is bowed to his will, and the af

are so far renewed and sanctified as to have in measure the same likings and dislikings, approbation and aversion, as God himself has. The duties of the first and second table of the law are comprehended in love to God and our neighbour; that therefore is the substance of all true holiness. The holiness of the temple consisted in its being consecrated and set apart to sacred purposes, and that of the christian consists in sequestration from the world and sin, and being devoted to the service of God; so that God may be said to dwell in him, as in the temple of old, shedding abroad his love in the heart, and there displaying his glory. Holiness in God is boundless and underived: in the creature it is dependant and limited. In both it implies that harmony, proportion, and fitness which ought to subsist in the conduct of an intelligent being towards other beings with whom he is connected. Where this is in part, there is holiness in part; and where this is perfectly, there is holiness in perfection.

2. As to its different stages and degrees. The principle of holiness is introduced in regeneration, and is afterwards exemplified in all the duties and graces of the christian life. At our first birth we begin to live, and at our new birth we begin to live to God. Then, and not before, we feel spiritual affections, and are capable of spiritual actions. Till then, our religion is a dead religion, and all our attempts to serve God are ineffectual and vain. "They that are in the flesh cannot please God."—Progressive holiness consists in part in the mortification of sin, in the gradual weakening of its power and dominion in the heart, till it be utterly abolished and destroyed. It also consists in the reviving of our graces, whereby they are strengthened and drawn forth into exercise, and in the lineaments of the divine image being more clearly impressed on the soul. Practical holiness consists in obedience to the divine commands, and obedience that is free and *voluntary, uniform and* persevering. A holy principle

will produce holy actions, and the tree will be known by its fruit.—Perfect holiness is not to be expected till we get to heaven. Here the saints breathe after it, and press towards it; but until their departure out of this world they will never obtain it. The body of sin and the body of flesh must die together. Some christians greatly excel others in their amiable and gracious dispositions, and in their life and conversation; yet none are what they would be. nor what they will be. Some are like the tall cedars in Lebanon, while others resemble low and slender shrubs; but in a future state the spirits of just men will be made equally and altogether perfect. They shall "all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." Ephes. iv. 13.

3. Holiness may be considered in reference to its objects. With respect to the most high God it implies an imitation of him, and a conformity to him; that we aim at his glory, and employ all our powers in his service. In short, it implies that we seek all from him, resign all to him, and seek in all things to please him. Hence it is called "holiness unto the Lord." In reference to the divine law it implies a complacency and delight in it, on account of its purity and spirituality, and a cheerful subjection to its requirements. "O how I love thy law," is still the language of every saint, as well as "I will keep thy statutes." As holiness is the reverse of moral evil, so it implies a universal hatred and opposition to it; a "resisting unto blood, striving against sin." It shall not rule; and if possible, it shall not exist. The gracious soul groans under it as a heavy burden, fights against it as an enemy, loathes it as a filthy disease, and uses all means to extirpate and destroy it. As it respects duties, holiness will lead to a ready compliance: others *may attend* to them, but the heart of a good man will *be in them*. "I delight to do thy will, O God: thy

is within my heart—In keeping thy commandments
e is great reward." Holy duties are his delight,
ate as well as public, those which relate to the
vard as well as the inward man. He loves to be
id not only in acts of piety and devotion towards
l, but in just and upright dealings towards men.
here is an uniformity in God's works, so there will
lso in those of the christian. "Then shall I be
imed when I have respect unto all thy command-
ts."

. It may be considered as to its effects. It is like
ointment of the right hand, which betrayed itself.
en assaulted with temptation, the holy man will
"How shall I do this great wickedness, and sin
nst God?" If invited to spiritual exercises, or
ving near to God, his soul will readily fall in with
"When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart
, Thy face, Lord, will I seek." His language to
tempter is, "Get thee behind me, Satan!" His
uage to God is, "O when wilt thou come unto
" Holiness will love that which is holy: hence
sabbath will be delighted in, because it is a day
ted to holy services and holy rest. God's house
be delighted in, because it is the holy place of the
rnacle of the Most High: his people, because they
holy people: and God himself, because he is a
God. For the same reason his salvation will be
bject of delight, as it includes a deliverance from
is well as wrath, and has been effected in a way
reflects abundant honour upon the holy character
od. "Zion is redeemed with judgment, and her
erts with righteousness." The pure in heart will
to be still more pure, to be freed from every
upt mixture, and purged from all the remains of
irity. Hence he cheerfully attends on divine
nances, submits to divine chastisements, waits for
h, and longs for heaven. True holiness will
ys aim at its own perfection.

II. Consider the motive by which the exhortation is enforced: "Be ye holy, *for I am holy*."

The divine purity is sometimes proposed as the model of our purity: "Be ye followers of God as dear children—be ye perfect even as your Father who is in heaven is perfect." Here it is proposed as the reason "Be ye holy, for I am holy." Other motives might be urged; but this is the greatest, and the sum of all the rest. There is a propriety in true holiness. Nothing can be more suitable to our situation and character as intelligent beings, and the relation we bear to one another: it is perfectly agreeable to sound reason, and the nature and fitness of things. "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good: and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" There is also a beauty in it. It is that which dignifies the man, and adorns the christian. There can be nothing truly amiable or of real worth in character without it. The angels of light are not so much distinguished from the angels of darkness by their power and wisdom, as by their purity: this is their perfection and their glory. This it is which forms the beauty of the church. The King's daughter is all glorious within—Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse; thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck. How fair is thy love, my sister, my spouse!" If the graces of the christian be thus pleasing to the Saviour, how much more shall his comforts delight our souls! Holiness, like wisdom, is the principal thing, and all the things which we can desire are not to be compared with it. It is the first thing that the enlightened soul will seek after, and the last that it will part with. Holiness is absolutely necessary, which nothing besides is. We may be happy without riches and honour, relations or friends, *or without* having where to lay our heads; but we

cannot be so without holiness. This is the one thing needful, without which other things are unprofitable, and in comparison of which they are needless. It may be said of it as Moses said of the instructions he gave to Israel, "It is not a light thing: it is our life." We may be comfortable in any state with it, but should be miserable in any state without it. Heaven itself could not make us happy, if we were unholy: God could not look upon us, angels could not look upon us, and we could only look upon ourselves with contempt. We should be left alone: the inhabitants of that world would be ashamed of our company, and theirs could be no enjoyment to us. Holiness makes heaven a place of happiness, and the want of it makes hell a place of torment. Peace and holiness are inseparable friends, going hand in hand together, and cannot exist apart, either in this world or that which is to come. But in addition to all the considerations, these motive in the text is urged: "Be ye holy, for I am holy."

1. God is holy; and therefore, without holiness we cannot be like him. Holiness in creatures, even that of angels and perfect spirits above, come infinitely short of the uncreated purity: but where there is no holiness, there can be no conformity to God; and where there is no conformity, there can be no enjoyment. All social happiness arises from congeniality of disposition and design; and where there is no assimilation to the great eternal Mind, there can be no communion, no delight. Great men and wise men may be admired and applauded, but the upright and the holy are the men after God's own heart.

2. God is holy, and therefore those only who are so can truly serve him. "Let us have grace," says the apostle, "whereby we may serve him acceptably, with reverence and godly fear." A holy God must have holy servants, and spiritual sacrifices; else in vain do we worship him. When Joshua saw that the children of Israel were still attached to the gods which their

fathers had served on the other side of the flood, he said to them, "Ye cannot serve Jehovah, for he is a holy God—he is a jealous God." No man can serve two masters. If Baal be God, serve him; but if the Lord be God, serve him. And when Jacob was about to build an altar unto the Lord, "he said unto his household, and to all that were with him, Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments; and let us arise, and go up to Bethel." Without holiness no man can see the Lord; and without it, no man can serve him. "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double-minded." Gen. xxxv. 2. Josh. xxiv. 19. Jam. iv. 8.

3. God is holy, and without holiness it is impossible to please him in any thing we do. He requires truth in the inward parts, and without this nothing can be acceptable. Our services, however numerous, would be utterly rejected; and however splendid, they would be abhorred. "Bring no more vain oblations: incense is an abomination unto me: your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul abhorreth; they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. When ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear. Wash ye, make you clean, and put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes." We may pray seven times a day, like David; fast twice in the week, like the Pharisee; humble ourselves, like Ahab; and drive on furiously, like Jehu: yet, if we are still in the flesh, we cannot please God, and by the increase of our services we only compass him about with lies. "I will wash my hands in innocency; so will I compass thine altar, O Lord." Isai. i. 13—16.

4. God is holy, and unless we be so too, we cannot be owned or acknowledged by him. He will not consider those as sons who bear no resemblance to him,

nor rank them among his jewels in the day that he shall make them up. Before he acknowledges any as his servants or subjects, he will inquire, Whose image or superscription do they bear? None will be found vessels of honour but such as have been vessels of mercy: those who have been filled with good treasure shall there be meet for the Master's use. "The righteous Lord loveth righteousness; his countenance doth behold the upright," and such only will he accept and honour.

5. God is holy, and we must be holy in order to enjoy him. "For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness; what communion hath light with darkness; and what concord hath Christ with Belial?" There neither is nor can be fellowship between parties and principles so opposite, nor is it possible for a holy God to hold communion with an unsanctified heart. It was sin that drove man at first from the earthly paradise, and it is this which still excludes him from the kingdom of heaven. Those who cannot endure the presence of a holy person, shall not enjoy the presence of a holy God; he is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and his arm shall be strong to punish those who are the workers of it. "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Matt. v.

Conclusion.

Be ye holy then, for God is holy. You that are not so, seek to be so; you that are so in part, labour to be more so. God hath chosen his people before the foundation of the world, that they should be holy, and without blame before him in love: and if you live and die in sin, it is a proof that whoever he may have chosen to salvation, you are not of that number. Christ also gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity; he was made sin, that we might

be made righteousness; and he sanctified himself, th he might sanctify his people. If therefore these en be not answered in us, we have neither part no l in his salvation. This is what the Holy Spirit aims in all his gracious operations; it is for this he pu life into our duties, and life into our souls. Let b lievers therefore exercise themselves unto godline growing in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lo and Saviour Jesus Christ. And having received su promises, let them cleanse themselves from all filth ness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in t fear of God. Let the prayer of each of us b "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew right spirit within me!" Psal. li. 10.

Hear me, O Lord, thou God of peace,
Whilst I my numerous sins confess;
Oh! purge my soul from every stain,
That not a single spot remain.

When pardon'd, and when purified,
I'll spread thy glories far and wide,
And loudly sing redeeming love,
Both here, and in the world above.

SERMON XIX.

HOSEA viii. 2.

Israel shall cry unto me, My God, we know thee.

ISRAEL pretended to know God, but in works denied him; for "they transgressed his covenant, and trespassed against his law." The Lord sent them prophets, rising up early and sending them; but they said unto the prophets, Prophesy not; and to the seers, See not. He wrote to them the great things of his law, but they were counted as a strange thing. They remained incorrigible under all their chastisements, and ignorant of their Maker amidst all the means of instruction. Yet they still pretend to some acquaintance with him, and carry on the delusion to the very last. They would cry and say, We know thee, when in truth they knew him not, and were only speaking lies in hypocrisy.

1. Observe the time when they would make this profession. In a season of great affliction and distress, when God would contend with them, when their enemies should be let loose upon them, and every thing around them look dark and distressing. "Israel is swallowed up; now shall they be among the Gentiles, as a vessel wherein is no pleasure. Now the Lord will remember their iniquity, and visit their sins." And now, when they begin to feel his wrath, they will begin to humble themselves, and profess themselves to be his people. Those who forget God in their

prosperity, are often made to remember him in a da of adversity; and when other refuges fail, they wi flee to him for refuge. Those who are backward t seek God at other times, yet in their affliction wi seek him early. Troubles will often make those pra who never prayed before; but they as often leave o prayer when the trouble is over, and this shews that came out of feigned lips. "Lord, in trouble hav they visited thee; they poured out a prayer when th chastening was upon them." They are desirous c being delivered from affliction, but are not willing t forsake their sins. Conviction is often the fruit o correction, but does not always lead to conversion Pharaoh was often convinced, but never converted and while the plagues were in Egypt, he wanted Mose to pray for him; but as often as they were removed he hardened his heart. So Israel would hold fa deceit amidst all their afflictions, and still contin their hypocritical profession, "My God, we kno thee."

2. The manner in which this profession would b made. They would not only speak, but speak vehe mently, and "cry" with earnestness and confidence And this would not be to others merely, but to Go himself: they shall "cry unto me." We seek you God, said the adversaries of Israel, to those who wer rebuilding the temple at Jerusalem: but these carrie the matter much farther. They not only conceived falsehood in their hearts, and uttered it with their lips but they did this before God. They called him the God, though they had no interest in him; and claime an acquaintance with him, while they were ignorant o his true character. Many will go to God, and say We know thee; to whom he will answer another day Depart from me, I know you not. There were som in the church of Smyrna who said they were Jews, an were not, but were of the synagogue of Satan; an similar to this is the conduct of Israel, in professin

to know God, while in works they denied him. Rev. ii. 9.

I. Consider the importance of a right knowledge of God, and making a profession of his name.

1. It is a great thing truly to know the Lord. A perfect knowledge is unattainable by us, and is proper to Him only whose understanding is infinite. "Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection?" The heathens are said to have known God, though they glorified him not as God: but such a notional idea of him as they possessed will be of no avail. The true knowledge of God is vital and efficacious, and has a transforming influence. "Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord." It is the effect of divine illumination, so that none have it till it is communicated from above. "God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ." It is that also by which the christian is distinguished from all others. Many have heard, and read, and thought about God, and may speak of him with some degree of propriety: they may also speak eloquently of his nature and perfections, of his works which they behold, and may profess to worship and adore him: but after all it is the disciple of Jesus only who truly knows him, for he it is that hath "given us an understanding that we may know him that is true." "No man knoweth the Father but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him." No nation under heaven was so blessed with the means of knowledge as the Jews, and yet Christ tells the Scribes and Pharisees, who were some of the most intelligent persons and greatest professors among them, "*Ye say that he is* your God; yet ye have not known *him.*" *The knowledge* of God is the delight and the

perfection of the gracious soul: it fits him for his service here, and the enjoyment of him hereafter. "It is life eternal to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." It is eternal life begun, secured, and in some measure possessed. Job xi. 7. John viii. 55. xvii. 3. 2 Cor. iii. 18. iv. 6. 1 John v. 20.

2. A profession of this knowledge is of great importance. It is no light matter to be able to say on good ground, "My God, I know thee." Much depends upon this, and it requires the most serious consideration. With the mouth, confession is made unto salvation; but there must first be a believing with the heart unto righteousness. True faith will produce a good confession, and it will produce it almost involuntarily; for where God has kindled the heavenly fire in the soul, it will break forth in some way or other. But how often does the tongue go before the heart, and even contrary to it, in professions of love to God and knowledge of him! Israel would have spoken more like the truth, if they had said with Pharaoh, "We know not the Lord, neither will we obey his voice." Before we profess to know God, therefore, we should seek to be truly acquainted with him; to know him in his real character and the relation he bears to his creatures, in his works and in his word, especially as he is revealed in the person of his Son. It is in him that he is God indeed, and there his glory shines. All other representations of him are faint and partial, when compared with this. "He is the image of the invisible God;" yea, "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person." It is in him that all the divine perfections shine forth in their highest splendour; and all we can know of God in any other way is but little better than speculation, which can neither animate to duty, support in affliction, or arm us against the fears of death. Till we see God in Christ, and worship him as such, it may be said of us as of the Samaritans, We worship we know not what.—

Let us therefore consider what we say when we profess to know God. It is to own and acknowledge him as our Creator, Lord, and Sovereign; as our Director, Guardian and Guide; as our Redeemer, Saviour and final Judge. Let us see to it also that our acknowledgment of him be accompanied with corresponding affections and dispositions towards him, going to the grounds of our religion, and tracing it up to its source and origin.

II. Notice some of the evidences of a true knowledge of God.

1. All saving knowledge proceeds from God only. It is communicated in his word, and by the mind being enlightened properly to understand it. In the glass of scripture, and the works of creation, we see much of the beauty and glory of the Lord; but it is by his shining into the heart, and shining on the sacred page. When the scales fall from our eyes, and the veil is taken from our hearts, a light from heaven breaks in upon us, and in his light we see light. Then we know God as he is, and see him in his true character. All the knowledge we have of him by the unassisted efforts of reason will come to nothing, and the light that is in us will be no better than darkness.

2. Saving knowledge will produce a humble confidence in God. Humility is one of the first-fruits of a good understanding. Other knowledge will puff up; but the tendency of this is to abase. Saints on earth are the humblest of men, and saints in heaven are more humble than they. The clearer our views are of the divine glory, the deeper will be our humiliation. When Isaiah saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filling the temple, he cried out, "Woe is me, for I am undone—mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear," says Job; "but now

mine eye seeth thee, wherefore I abhor myself, and pent in dust and ashes." Right views of God howev while they promote reverence and fear, will inspire l and confidence. "They that know thy name will their trust in thee." Where there is no knowled there can be no trust; for how can we believe in him whom we have not heard? We can easily trust whom we know and love, and a true knowledge of G will always be attended with holy affections towa him. When the understanding is enlightened, heart will burn with love.

3. A spiritual acquaintance with God will be companied with a conformity of soul to him. Th will be a resemblance of his holy nature, and a subj tion to his holy will. By beholding his glory we sh be changed into the same image; and the brighter views, the fuller will be our conformity. In hea we shall see him as he is, and then we shall be co pletely like him. No one can truly know the L without being obedient to him, and the outward cha will be as evident as the inward change is real. "T wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceal gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fru without partiality, and without hypocrisy." A man n have every other kind of wisdom, and yet be a slave his lusts; but this leads to liberty and real holin The sons of Eli served at the altar; but being unh and profane, it is said of them that they "knew not Lord." All that knowledge which is inoperative, does not bring forth the fruits of righteousness, is em and vain. Mere light in the understanding, with love in the heart, will only aggravate our condem tion, and render our depravity the more inexcusal

Conclusion.

(1.) It is a great evil to profess to know God, *yet, in works*, to deny him. A wicked professor i *disgrace* to religion, a stumbling-block to others,

teful in the sight of God. A profession, without cor-
ıponding practice, is but solemn mockery: it is like
ɔ conduct of the Roman soldiers, who arrayed Christ
a purple robe, and cried, Hail, Master; and then
it in his face! This is adding hypocrisy to sin, and
ling hatred with lying lips, to make it a still greater
omination. "If we say that we have fellowship with
n, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the
ıth." Such iniquity and deceit shall at length be de-
cted, exposed to shame, and doomed to punishment.
ypocrites shall have their portion in the lake which
rneth with fire and brimstone, and the smoke of
eir torment shall ascend up for ever and ever.

(2.) Let us beware of the contrary extreme, of with-
ılding an open profession of the truth after we have
ɔen brought to understand and receive it. The fearful
ıd faint-hearted, who virtually deny the Saviour, act
ı much out of character as the bold and self-confident
eceiver. "Whosoever shall confess me before men,
im shall the Son of man also confess before the angels
f God: but he that denieth me before men, shall be
nied before the angels of God." Luke xii. 8, 9.

(3.) The subject shews us the reason why many
ɔostatise from their profession. They have received
e truth, but not in the love of it: hence "their root
ıall be as rottenness, and their blossom shall go up as
ıst." The house that is built upon the sand may
and for a time, but sooner or later it must fall. He
at believes in Christ, and builds on him as the foun-
ıtion, shall not make haste, and shall never be
ɔnfounded; but the overflowing scourge shall pass
rough and overwhelm such as have made lies their
ɔfuge, and hid themselves under falsehood. Empty
rofessors are like wandering stars, or meteors, that
laze for awhile, and soon disappear: but real chris-
ans are like the stars which the Saviour holds in his
ight hand, and which shall shine for ever.

(4.) *The enlightening* and renewing influences of

the Holy Spirit are necessary to form the christian racter. Spiritual knowledge is the foundation (true religion, and this can proceed only from his t ing. "The spirit of the Lord is the spirit of wi and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord— the Lord thy God which teacheth thee to profit, v leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldst go." xi. 2. xlviii. 17.

With an illumin'd eye,
To see the truths of God,
The mysteries of redeeming love,
And reconciling blood:

The streams of life and peace,
And fountain whence they flow,
The doctrines which I should embrace,
The duties which I owe—

This is a gift divine;
Bestow it, Lord, on me!
Oh speak the word, 'Let there be light!'
And light shall straightway be.

Let heavenly wisdom dwell
Within this heart of mine;
Watch o'er my thoughts, direct my words,
And in my actions shine.

SERMON XX.

Rom. viii. 28.

We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose.

The things which an apostle had to deliver were not mere matters of opinion, or of doubtful disputation, but of absolute certainty. Primitive christians received the word in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance; and in this manner primitive preachers delivered it. "We know," said Paul, "that all things work together for good:" we are confirmed in this important truth, and wish others to be so too. We know it by divine revelation: it is what the scriptures abundantly testify. We know it by immediate inspiration; for we also have the Spirit of God, and are under his special influence. We know it by experience and observation: "that which we have tasted and handled of the word of life, declare we unto you." In this truth all the saints in heaven and on earth are agreed. It is appointed of God that all things shall work together for good to them that love him, and his counsel shall stand. It is promised, and he will not alter the thing that is gone out of his mouth. What unerring wisdom ordains, almighty power will accomplish. Such also is the love which God bears to his people, and such his concern for their welfare, that he will make all things subservient to their salvation.

I. Attend to the description given of true believers: they are such as "love God," and are "called according to his purpose."

1. They are such as love God. Carnal men love the world, and the things that are in the world: but christians love God, and savour of the things that are

of God. He is the first object of their esteem, and all his perfections appear to them infinitely amiable. Their hearts exclaim, "How great is his goodness and how great is his beauty!" They love him with complacency and delight, rejoicing in what he is in himself, and what he is to them. All their confidence is in them, and all their happiness is derived from him. "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none on earth that I desire besides thee." His presence supplies the place of every earthly good, and they are happy in him when they have nothing else to make them so. "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vine; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." They are concerned for his glory, and derive their best enjoyments from the prosperity of his cause and interest in the world. "Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God—all my springs are in thee."—The Lord's people are possessed of humility and fear, faith and hope; but love is that by which they are distinguished. This is often discernible when other graces are not so, and is mentioned as having the pre-eminence above the rest. "Now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity." Love is the life of all the graces, and the soul of all religion. It is this that influences the conduct, forms the character, and renders our obedience pleasant and acceptable. This it is that makes us to resemble the Saviour, that fits us for his will on earth, and the enjoyment of him in heaven. Psal. lxxiii. 25. Hab. iii. 17, 18. 1 Cor. xiii. 13.

2. They are called according to his purpose. This is expressive of the change wrought upon the soul in regeneration, whereby the calls of the gospel are *rendered effectual*. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power."—Three things are implied.—

(1.) That this call is under the special direction of God, being "according to his purpose." Many are called by the gospel, and but few chosen: those only obey the call whose hearts are subdued by divine grace. It is the purpose of God that secures our salvation; and, but for this, none would be brought to believe and receive the truth.—(2.) That when God calls a sinner he does it effectually: it is easy to him whose work it is. Herein he acts as a Sovereign, whose will cannot be resisted or controlled, while he *deals* with us as reasonable creatures. He that calls men out of their graves can easily call them off from their sins. When he passes by the sinner, and beholds him in his blood, he saith unto him, Live; and straightway he is quickened who before was dead in trespasses and sins. "And who, as I, shall call, and shall declare it, and set it in order?" The power that made the world can change the heart, and that power alone is sufficient for so great a work.—(3.) This call implies that the sinner was once afar off, but is now made nigh: he is turned from darkness to light, *and from the* power of Satan unto God. Once he was deaf to the voice of conscience and of God: now he is made to hear and obey. He is brought from bondage into liberty; from serving idols, to serve the living and the true God. His language now is, "O Lord our God, other lords besides thee have had dominion over us; but by thee only will we make mention of thy name." May those who have thus been distinguished by divine grace be concerned to walk worthy of God, who hath called them to his kingdom and glory! Isai. xxvi. 13. xliv. 7. 1 Thess. ii. 12.

II. Consider the peculiar privilege of such as love God, and are called according to his purpose: "All things work together for their good."

1. Let us observe what things are here intended. *The believer has* an interest in all good things, and

these we are sure will turn to his advantage. Spiritual blessings are good in themselves, and cannot but be so in their tendency and effects: to be blessed with them is to be blessed indeed. But the apostle is not speaking of good things, but of evil things; which, in their own nature, tended to injure and annoy. Hence he asks, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us." Evil things, therefore, by the overruling providence and grace of God, shall be productive of good to his people. Among these we may notice the following:

(1.) All the plots and contrivances of their enemies, however artfully formed or executed. The Lord very often takes the cunning in their own craftiness, and carries the counsels of the froward headlong; and if not, he will make them subservient to some gracious purpose; and that which was aimed at, the destruction of the church, shall contribute to its greater glory. The more the waters were increased the higher the ark was lifted up; and the Hebrew worthies were never had in such high esteem, as when they passed through the fiery trial uninjured and undismayed. The arrow which does not retort upon him that shoots it, shall only wound and open the imposthume which might otherwise have proved fatal.

(2.) All the evils and stratagems of Satan to ruin and destroy, shall be overruled for good. He can do no more than what God permits him: his power shall be bounded, and his wrath restrained. He goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour, but there are some whom he shall not devour; and if he frighten the sheep, it shall bring them nearer to the shepherd. The wounding of Christ's heel shall be the bruising of the serpent's head. Temptation shall excite caution, and lead to more importunate prayer. Furious

assaults shall stir up to vigorous resistance, and the irritating of corruption shall issue in its mortification. The shaking of the tree shall make it take deeper root, and the pruning of it make it more fruitful. Satan's accusations against Job tended to illustrate and establish his integrity: "When I am tried," says he, "I shall come forth as gold." His resisting of Joshua the high priest procured him a royal vesture, and renewed discoveries of pardoning love. The messenger which he sent to buffet Paul drew forth the compassion of his divine Master, and gained him a promise which should be his comfort and support through life: "My grace is sufficient for thee: my strength is made perfect in weakness." It brought God nearer to him, and drove him nearer to God.

(3.) The withdrawment of spiritual comfort and the hidings of God's face shall terminate in the good of them that love him. A state of desertion is very distressing to the soul, but in the end it is often found profitable. The Lord leaves us that we may not leave him: he forsakes us for a time that he may not forsake us for ever. Hereby he makes sin odious, and creature-comforts tasteless, that heaven may become more desirable. The want of his presence here makes us long for his presence above. Inward distress tends to rouze us from a state of spiritual sloth, quicken us to the duty of self-examination, and prepare us for future consolations; so that, when enjoyed, we value them more highly, and preserve them more carefully. When the Spouse found her Beloved, who had withdrawn himself, she "held him fast, and would not let him go."

(4.) All manner of afflictions, whether ordinary or otherwise, shall be overruled for good. Pain and sickness, worldly losses and disappointments, the unkindness of friends, and the opposition of enemies, shall all be overruled by a wise and holy Providence. One messenger after another may come with evil tidings, as in the case of Job; deep may call unto deep at the noise of the water-spouts, as in the case of David:

but however great and manifold may be the suffering of the saints, they shall all turn to their advantage a last. Where there is a casting down there shall als be a lifting up, and God will save the humble person Afflictions are as needful as ordinances, and are some times more profitable. He who said, "It is good fo me to draw near to God," said also, "It is good fo me that I have been afflicted." Paul's thorn in th flesh was more useful to him than his rapture into th third heavens. The one had like to have exalted his above measure, the other humbled him: the one *lef* him at a loss whether he was in the body or out of th body, but the other convinced him that he was still i the flesh, and in a state of affliction and infirmity Next to the Saviour himself there is nothing we hav more reason to be thankful for than affliction.

(5.) Death itself, of whatsoever kind it may be, is th christian's gain. "For thy sake we are killed all th day long; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter,' said the apostle. Then it is added, "Nay, in all thes things we are more than conquerors through him tha loved us." (ver. 36, 37.) Death releases the christia from all his sins and sorrows: at that fatal hour h exchanges labour for rest, a painful warfare for a com plete victory; sighs for songs, and earth for heaven Death is a dark valley, but it leads to the realms c light and glory. The divine presence supports us in th prospect of death, and the hope of fully enjoying it ens bles us to triumph over it. Psal. xxiii. 4. 1 Cor. xv. 5

I have not mentioned moral evil as among the thing which work for good, as the apostle does not appe to have had any reference to it, but to those natur evils which are common to all believers, and which a noticed in different parts of this chapter. It is tr indeed that God may and often does overrule even t sins of his people for their good; but as this is n within the compass of the promise, so it is more th in ordinary cases we are warranted to expect. T *spirit* wounded for sin is often made more watch

gainst it; and the saints when recovered from their falls are known to walk more circumspectly, and become more useful. But the nature of sin itself is evil, only evil, and its natural consequence is wrath. It injures the body, filling it with various diseases, and unfits it for the service of God. It defiles, debases and injures the soul. It weakens our graces, darkens our evidences, deprives us of comfort, adds a sharpness to all our sorrows, and if it do not shut us out of heaven, it will make us go mourning to the very gates of it.

2. Notice in what manner all things are productive of good to them that love God, and who are called according to his purpose. They are said to "work together" for this purpose. All things are at work, and the result of all shall be the good of God's chosen. Sometimes they issue in their temporal good. The more the children of Israel were oppressed, the more they grew and multiplied. If not for their temporal good, yet all shall lead to their spiritual advantage, producing the peaceable fruits of righteousness. And not only so, but their eternal good shall be promoted by *all the* evils they are called to endure in the present life. "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." (2 Cor. iv. 17.)—More particularly,

(1.) Things do not work together for our good by any inherent or physical efficacy, but by virtue of a divine appointment and designation. The rough and irregular motions of the wheels are guided by infinite wisdom, for they are said to be full of eyes round about. God sometimes works by second causes, and sometimes without them. He avails himself of the pride and ambition of the great as means of delivering his people, though they mean not so, neither do their hearts think so. Men have their ends in view, and God has his: they gratify their malice and ambition, and he accomplishes the purposes of his grace. "Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee, and the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain." The earth shall help

the woman, and the dissemination of error ev
contribute to the spread of truth. Psal. lx
Phil. i. 19.

(2.) Not always visibly, though really. Ja
"All these things are against me;" but it wa
It is the glory of God to conceal a thing:
more obscurity attends the object, the great
excellency of faith. "Blessed are they that
seen, and yet have believed." We must fo
Lord as Abraham did, not knowing whithe
lead us. Confiding in his wisdom and good
shall find light to arise in the darkness, and
common perplexities are the forerunners of
wonderful salvations.

(3.) Not immediately, but eventually.
ham's vision the smoaking furnace went b
burning lamp: one indicated the sorrows and
of the church, and the other their happy issu
trials were very uncommon, and his faith wa
gered by them that he said, "Behold, he finc
sions against me; he counteth me for his ener
his latter end was better than his beginning.
God brings us forth to the light, we behold h
ousness, admire his wisdom, and are asham
folly. Subsequent providences tend to expla
ding ones, and we afterwards see the kind and
design of those events which to us appeared
adverse. Gen. xv. 17. Job xxxiii. 10. Psal. l

(4.) Not apart, but in conjunction: all thing
together" for good. It is not one single ev
produces the desired effect, but all the provic
God in connexion with each other, like the
parts of a machine which is at work for one g
All second causes are under the direction of t
first Cause. That which in itself might be pe
when mixed with other ingredients, becomes n
and salutary. The strings of a musical instru
struck in their proper order, yield an agreeable l
and the various movements in a complicated

chinery complete the design of the artist: but if one ring of the instrument be broke, or one movement of e machine be out of order, neither of them will swer the appointed end. We are often perplexed y viewing only a detached part of the great whole, so at instead of symmetry and order, we see nothing but scord and confusion. A complete view of the whole ystem would excite our admiration, and fill us with e most agreeable surprise. This will be the happiess of the saints in a better world; and what we know ot now we shall know hereafter. We shall then see s we are seen, and know as we are known; and be lly assured that "all the paths of the Lord are mercy nd truth unto such as keep his covenant and his estimonies." Psal. xxv. 10.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If all things work together for good, let this be n antidote against impatience and unbelief. Did we ut fully credit this important truth, how easy and appy would it make us in every condition! It was his which taught Paul how to be abased, and how to bound; to be full and to be hungry, both to abound nd to suffer need. No situation in life could distress im overmuch, for he knew that however it might fare vith him by the way, it would be well with him at last. When providences are dark and intricate, we should vait the issue, to see the end of the Lord. Amidst all ur present troubles and infirmities, there is something etter behind. When that which is perfect is come, hen that which is in part shall be done away.

2. What encouragement is here to true religion! Godliness is profitable unto all things, having proise of the life that now is, and of that which is to ome." The cross is the worst part of religion, and et even this is better than the best of this world. It better to suffer with Christ, if we can but suffer like m, than to reign with Cesar. If we be chastened of

the Lord, it is that we may not be condemned with the world. If we have but little peace by the way, we shall have it at last: "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace." Psal. xxxvii. 37.

3. If all things work together for good to them that love God, it is to them only, and it will be otherwise with them that love him not. If we be his enemies, all things will work together against us, and *end* in our final ruin. Our table will become a snare, and our prosperity destroy us. The doctrine of the cross will be a stumbling-block, and a savour of death unto death to us. In this world we may be comforted, but in the other world we shall be tormented: here we may receive our good things, but there our evil things. God will be better to his people in the end than they expected, and worse to the wicked than they feared. If we be right in ourselves, every thing will be right to us: but if we be wrong, every thing will be wrong to us. "Unto the pure all things are pure; but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled." Tit. i. 15.

4. If our good be God's end, let his glory be ours: if he seeks our happiness, let us seek his honour. Let us be thankful for all his dispensations in providence and grace; for "whoso offereth praise, glorifieth me." Let us also be fruitful; for "herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit." The more we aim at his glory, the more we possess of true religion, and the brighter our evidences of interest in him. Let our great concern be that Christ may be magnified in us, whether it be by life or by death: then we may say with Paul, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." Psal. l. 23. John xv. 8. Phil. i. 20.

R. Clay, Printer, 9, Devonshire-street, Bishopsgate.

TWENTY

SHORT DISCOURSES,

ADAPTED TO

VILLAGE WORSHIP,

OR

THE DEVOTIONS OF THE FAMILY.

VOL. I.

2nd Part

Fourth Edition.

PUBLISHED FROM THE MANUSCRIPTS OF THE LATE

REV. B. BEDDOME, A. M.

LONDON:

Printed by R. Clay, Devonshire Street, Bishopsgate;

FOR BURTON AND SMITH, 156, LEADENHALL STREET.

1822.

SERMON XI.
1 Thess. v. 21. P
Hold fast that which is good .....

SERMON XII.
1 Thess. v. 22.
Abstain from all appearance of evil .....

SERMON XIII.
John xviii. 37.
Every one that is of the truth, heareth my voice 1

SERMON XIV.
Luke xxii. 48.
Betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss 1

SERMON XV.
Acts i. 25.
Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place 1

SERMON XVI.
Hebrews vi. 17.
Heirs of promise 13

SERMON XVII.
Hebrews xii. 14.
Follow peace with all men 14

SERMON XVIII.
Hebrews xii. 14.
And holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord .. 1

SERMON XIX.
Zechariah iii. 2.
Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire 1

SERMON XX.
Matt. xix. 20.
All these things have I kept from my youth up. What lack I yet? 1

SERMON I.

COLOS. i. 18.

Who is the Beginning?

NAMES and titles amongst men are generally insignificant, and are not characteristic of the persons to whom they are applied. But the titles given to Christ are always descriptive and recommendatory; denoting the peculiar excellencies of which he is possessed, and the invaluable blessings which he imparts. They either tend to illustrate the glory of his character as Mediator, or display his infinite and adorable perfections as God over all, and blessed for ever.

I. He is the beginning, as to his divine nature.—He is here called the image of the invisible God; not an imperfect representation, as angels and saints may be; but as it is said in another place, he "is the express image of his person." He is personally distinct from the Father, but essentially the same; not only manifesting, but participating all his glories. Hence when Philip made that request, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us; Jesus answered, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me. Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father, But this could only be true, on the supposition of a perfect equality, and a full participation of the divine nature.

1. The pre-eminence that is here ascribed to Christ, implies his eternity and self-existence. He is not God by derivation, or by commission; but is really and properly so. He is before all things, and by him all things con-

sist; he is therefore the beginning, and the fountain of all created existence. What he is as a divine person, that he ever was, and will never cease to be. He who is the first beginning and last end of all things, must himself be without beginning or end; and is the same yesterday, to day, and for ever. The same in the perfections of his nature, and consequently in his claim to our regard. As man he had beginning of days, and end of life; but as God he has neither. His goings forth have been of old, from everlasting. He is in himself the mighty God, and towards his church the everlasting Father. He is self-originated, and underived, and was eternally All, when all things which ever were, now are, or ever shall be, were nothing. I AM is his memorial to all generations; and this name denotes necessary existence, and absolute immutability.

2. The pre-eminence ascribed to him, implies that he is the fountain of life and existence to all creatures. He who received life from none, communicates life to all. The vegetative life in plants, the animal life in beasts, the rational life in man, the spiritual life in saints, and that eternal life for which they are preparing, are all from Christ. Not only our being, but all our intellectual and moral excellencies are from him. By his power we are what we are as men; by his grace we are what we are as Christians. Ministers derive their gifts, and magistrates their authority from Christ. He is the beginning of time; and is that angel who stood upon the earth and the sea, and who shall one day swear that time shall be no longer. He is the beginning of the world, not by a delegated power, but a power inherent in himself. All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. It was he that spread forth the heavens like a curtain, that laid the foundations of the earth, and fixed the boundaries of the raging sea; saying, hitherto shalt thou go, and no farther, and here shall thy proud waves be staid. From him the sun receives its light,

and the stars their influence. He is the great origin of our being, and of all existence; universal nature owns him its sovereign and its head. Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker. For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. Let us enter his courts with thanksgiving, and his gates with praise.

II. Christ is the beginning, considered as Mediator.—He is the origin of the church of God; it is he that raises it out of the ruins of the fall. Had it not been for him, it would have had no existence. Is it a temple? He builds it, and is the foundation on which it rests. Is it a garden? He plants it, encloses and separates it from the wilderness, and makes it the object of his delight and care. He is also the beginning to individual saints. Our life is from his death, and all the streams of blessedness flow from his inexhaustible fulness.—More particularly,

1. He is the source and origin of reconciliation, and the beginning of our peace with God. We are by nature in a state of enmity with God, and obnoxious to his displeasure: this makes reconciliation necessary, and the whole of it is to be ascribed to the mediation of Christ. Those who were sometimes far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ; for he is our peace, who hath made both one. The word of reconciliation is committed to ministers, and by them it is dispensed; but the work of reconciling sinners unto God, belongs to Jesus only. The great and leading truth of the gospel is, "that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." Here our prayers and our tears have no influence; neither our own work, nor the work of the Holy Spirit on our hearts, contribute any thing towards making our peace with God. There is no admission to the divine favour, without a satisfaction to divine justice; and Christ made that satisfaction by his offering on the cross. Without shedding of blood there is no remis-

sion; and when the blood of bulls and of goats could not take away sin, Christ offered his own blood once for all, through which we have the forgiveness of our sins, according to the riches of his grace. When Christ said, it is finished; the law said, I am satisfied, and God is well pleased. In beholding a bleeding Saviour, we see a reconciled God. Fury is not in me, says the great and eternal Judge; though he is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and will by no means clear the guilty. How this is effected, is admirably described by that voice from the excellent glory, which said, "This is my beloved Son," not only with whom, but "*in* whom I am well pleased."

2. Christ is the beginning, in reference to the change wrought in us by regenerating grace. This change, which is begun in this world and completed in the next, is generally ascribed to the Holy Spirit; yet herein he acts as the Spirit of Christ, in his name and by his authority. "He shall glorify me," says the Saviour; "for he shall receive of mine and shall shew it unto you." He conveys to us all spiritual blessings out of the fulness of Christ; and there is not an act that he performs, but Christ is both its origin and end. In the economy of redemption, he is Christ's servant, even as Christ is the Father's servant. Thus the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, is said to make us free from the law of sin and death. Both our title to heaven, and our meetness for heaven, have their beginning in Christ. He is the source of our holiness as well as of our happiness. Christ within us is the hope of glory, with respect to preparation, as Christ without us is the ground on which it is bestowed. Our eyes are blind till he opens them, and our hearts hard till he softens them. We have no spiritual taste or feeling till he imparts them, and we lie in the grave of corruption till he says, Come forth! Hence it is one of his glorious characters, that he is The Life; even that Eternal Life which was with the Father, and is manifested unto us.

We cannot properly be said to have a being till we have life; and that life is alone from Christ. For in him was life, and the life was the light of men. He gives it at first and more abundantly afterwards. Hence an apostle could say, I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.

3. With respect to the resurrection at the last day, Christ is also the beginning. His resurrection was the pattern and the pledge of the resurrection of all the saints, manifesting both its nature and certainty. He is the first-begotten from the dead, and the first-fruits of them that slept. The same Spirit that revived and quickened him, shall quicken the mortal bodies of all his saints. They virtually arose with him; are made to sit together in heavenly places, in Christ Jesus; and shall actually be raised by that mighty power, whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself. Because I live, says he, ye shall live also. The very flesh that lies rotting in the grave, and has been the food of worms, is united to Christ; and in virtue of that union, shall be raised again, and corruption shall put on incorruption, that mortality may be swallowed up of life. Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. Oh death, where is thy sting? Oh grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

(1). We may from hence learn, the honour that is due to Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named. It was foretold that he should be great, and he is so. In all things he has the pre-eminence, and to him alone is the glory due. Oh how excellent is his name in all the earth; his glory is above the heavens! When God raised him from the dead, he set him at his own right hand, far above all principality and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under

his feet, and gave him to be the head over all thin to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him th filleth all in all.

(2). As Christ is the foundation and the beginning all spiritual blessings, so these blessings can belong none but such as are *in him*. Not one word of comfc is spoken in the scriptures, nor any blessing promis to unbelievers; they possess nothing that is worth pc sessing, and have a right to nothing that is worth e joying. Those who are without Christ, are witho holiness, and without hope. Salvation never comes any house, or to any heart, till Christ is first receive and those who have him, shall inherit all things.

(3). He who is the beginning is also the end; a this secures the happiness of all the saints. He who h begun the good work, will complete it; and he who the author, will also be the finisher of faith. He h put his hand to the plow, and will not look back. I has loved his own which are in the world, and he w love them to the end. His hand has laid the found tion, and he will bring forth the top-stone with shou ings,—grace, grace unto it. "The Lord will perfe that which concerneth me: thy mercy, oh Lord, e dureth for ever: forsake not the work of thine ov hands—now unto him who is able to keep us from fa ing, and to present us faultless before the presence his glory with exceeding joy; to the only wise God o Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and pow both now and ever. Amen."

SERMON II.

ISAIAH xxxvii. 4.

Lift up thy prayer for the remnant that is left.

HEZEKIAH being both distressed and alarmed at the invasion of his land by Sennacherib, king of Assyria, sends some of his chief officers to the prophet Isaiah, entreating him to use his interest in the court of heaven, in behalf of himself and his afflicted people; hoping that God would be prevailed upon to scatter the gathering clouds; or if not, it would afford some satisfaction that they had not been wanting in their application to him. If prayer be answered, the blessing coming in that way will be doubly sweet; but if not, prayer itself affords some relief. The possibility of acceptance and success is a sufficient motive to the duty: Lift up therefore thy prayer for the remnant that is left.

I. The person who is to engage in the work of intercession, was one of great eminence in the church and commonwealth, a good and a great man, a prophet of the Lord, and one who was indulged with peculiar nearness to him. To such a one, prayer is not only a duty, but a delight. Others ought to pray; but he *can* pray, and cannot but pray. Persons of eminent piety will not be contented with ordinary applications to the throne of grace; they will seek till they find, and wrestle till they prevail. Therefore lift up *thy* prayer, oh man of God; for the prayer of the righteous availeth much.

Peradventure, the Lord will be entreated of *thee*, even though he should not hear *our* supplications.

This was a day of trouble, as Hezekiah calls it; and therefore it ought to be a day of prayer. The throne of grace is at all times accessible; but at such times we are invited to come boldly, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in every time of need. "Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." The Lord could deliver us without our seeking him; but prayer is the appointed means, and every blessing is endeared that comes to us through that medium. Then it is we see his hand, feel our dependence upon him, and give him the glory due unto his name.

Intercession is the duty of all the saints; for they are exhorted to offer supplications, prayers, and intercession for all men, and more espeically for one another. The prophet would therefore answer the messengers of Hezekiah, as Samuel did the people of Israel in a similar case: "God forbid that I should sin against the Lord, in ceasing to pray for you." Ministers should pray for their people, and people for their ministers, whose labours are so arduous, and whose insufficiency is so great. But herein ministers should take the lead; the better qualified they are, the greater is their obligation, and the more criminal their neglect. Their gifts cannot be more improved, nor their graces exercised in a more agreeable way. By their office they are to stand in the gap, and endeavour to heal the breach. They are the church's watchmen, and God's remembrancers. Like Aaron, they are to bear the names of the tribes of Israel upon their breast, when they enter into the holy of holies, and appear before the mercy-seat. A prayerless preacher is a most awful character. Those who pray not for others, do not pray aright for themselves, and are strangers to the benevolent spirit of the gospel. *Even wicked* men know so much of religion as to expect *that good men* should pray, and are often anxious for an

nterest in their prayers when they are visited with ome sore calamity. Zedekiah, who at one time cast Jeremiah the prophet into a dungeon, at another time lesired an interest in his supplications, and sent messengers to him, saying, "Pray now unto the Lord our God for us." And God often spares the wicked for the sake of the righteous, and in answer to their requests, even as the intercession of Abraham was accepted for the inhabitants of Sodom.

II. Those for whom the prophet was requested to pray, were "the remnant that was left;" a certain number, known unto God, and who remained after the rest were scattered or destroyed. Thus on another occasion, "all the people from the least even unto the greatest came near, and said unto Jeremiah the prophet, Let, we beseech thee, our supplication be accepted before hee, and pray unto the Lord thy God, even for all this emnant, (for we are left but a few of many, as thine eyes lo behold us,) that the Lord thy God may shew us the way wherein we may walk, and the thing that we may lo. The remnant might be like that in Elijah's time, of whom the Lord said, "I have left me seven thousand n Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which have not kissed him;" an impolluted, undefiled remnant, who continued faithful and obedient, amidst the general apostacy.

The prophet's making intercession for this remnant, f so it be understood, may teach us, that though in our prayers we should be forgetful of none, yet we are to be particularly mindful of our fellow christians, especially when in a state of adversity. They have also most need of our prayers; for their enemies are more numerous, malignant, and powerful, than those of other people. Satan will not fail to set his engines at work, and stir up all his emissaries to afflict them. *They* are most desirous of our prayers, and will be most thankful for *an interest in them.* God is most likely to hear such

prayers; for he is the Saviour of all men, but *especially* of them that believe. In praying for them we pray for those whom Christ himself prays for, and his prayers are never in vain. Some good men have expected more from the prayers of others than from their own; and even Paul himself was anxious for an interest in the prayers of his friends. It becomes us also to be attentive to public and national calamities, as well as to those which are personal and private, and to spread them before the Lord in prayer and supplication. We have examples of this kind in Nehemiah, in Daniel, and in others of the saints, who made intercession for the church of God and the nation, in the time of their distress; and which are left on record for our instruction, on whom the ends of the world are come.

III. There is something observable as to the manner in which the prophet's intercession is requested: "Lift up thy prayer," said the messengers of the king, for the remnant that is left.—This expressive form of speech may teach us to remember,

1. That the glorious object of prayer is infinitely exalted, sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, his train filling the temple. And though he condescends to hearken to our requests, he is still the high and the lofty One who inhabiteth eternity, and must be approached with reverence and godly fear. All our thoughts and conceptions are lost in the immensity of God, whose greatness is unsearchable. Lift up your eyes on high, says the evangelical prophet, and behold, who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number; he calleth them all by names, by the greatness of his might; for that he is strong in power, not one faileth. Heaven is his throne, and the earth is his footstool. When we lift up our prayer, it is from heaven that he sends an answer. Hear thou, says *Solomon, in* heaven thy dwelling place. When he

aves, it is from heaven. He shall send from heaven, ays David, and shall save me. All our prayers there-ore should be directed to heaven. Thus our Lord aught his disciples to pray, Our Father who art in eaven. If as the scriptures teach, "God is in the eight of heaven; and yet behold, the height of the tars, how high they are;" it is only the prayer that is ifted up, with our eyes and our hearts, that can reach is throne. Thus David prays: "Give ear unto my oice when I cry unto thee: let my prayer be set orth before thee as incense, and the lifting up of ny hands as the evening sacrifice." This expression nay also teach us,

2. The low and mean condition of the worshipper. We are to remember not only that God is in heaven, but that we are upon earth. We are less than nothing in his sight, and should be so in our own. We lie in the dust before him, and it becomes us to speak out of the dust; so that what was delivered as a threatening, may be considered as a duty. "Thou shalt speak out of the ground, and thy speech shall be low out of the dust." Isa. xxix. 4. Such was Abraham's prayer: Behold, says he, I who am but dust and ashes, have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord. The lower a sinful creature falls, the higher his prayer rises. The distance between God and us, especially as sinners, is immense; and if we do not know our distance, he will make us feel and keep it too. The day of the Lord of hosts shall lie upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up, and he shall be brought low. He resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble. Isa. ii. 10. No prayers are so hateful in the sight of God as those of vain and self-conceited sinners, who think they shall be heard for their much speaking. To such he will say, Bring no more vain oblations; it is a smoke in my nostrils, I cannot away with it. Nor is the noisy declamatory prayer acceptable to him, causing our voice to be heard on high;

but to that man will he look that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at his word.

Other particulars are also suggested by this impressive form of speech; such as—

(1). The secrecy of prayer, according to our Lord's direction: "When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut the door, pray to thy Father, which seeth in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly." Lifting up a prayer may denote the same thing as David expresses, by the lifting up of the soul to God, in mental and silent ejaculation. This is the essence of prayer, without any of its external appendages. It is prayer before God, when there is no appearance of it before men. Such brief and tender embassies to heaven are likely to meet with little interruption, because they may be made before the corruptions of the heart have power to operate, or before the adversary can know the purpose for which they are employed. Containing also an implicit acknowledgment of the divine omniscience, and of our absolute dependence upon God, these silent and momentary aspirations are highly pleasing in his sight. Thus Hannah and Nehemiah prayed; and thus, in all companies, at all seasons, by day and by night, at home and abroad, we may make our requests known unto God; may hold communion with him in all the cares and concerns of life; may pray without ceasing, and in every thing give thanks.

(2). The importunity and ardour of prayer, may be denoted by this expression. In lifting up our prayer to God, our affections should rise high, though our voice may be low and feeble. God invites us to his throne, and we should labour to be in good earnest when we come thither. Thus Bartimeus, and thus the woman of Canaan prayed. In scripture, prayer is often expressed by crying, groaning, wrestling, labouring, striving; all which denote a holy importunity, or sacred violence. It is a powerful effort of the divine principle,

spirit returning to that God who gave it. Prayer
hout affection is a form without life, a body without
ul. To lift up our prayer, is to exert all the strength
vigour of the mind in that holy exercise; like our
sed Lord, who when in the garden prayed more
more earnestly; and the greater his agony, the
e fervent were his prayers.
3). The spirituality and heavenly-mindedness of the
son engaged. There may be spirituality in prayer,
ere there is not that earnestness and vehemence
ch might be desired. Who would not wish to ex-
ience that humble, composed, and devotional frame
nind which David discovered, when he went in and
before the Lord, recollected the mercies of his past
, and broke forth into that rapturous expression of
titude and love? "Who am I, oh Lord God, and
it is my father's house, that thou hast brought me
nerto!" And at another time he forms this resolu-
n: "Unto thee will I direct my prayer and look
;" language which expresses an elevated and hea-
ly frame of mind. As a prologue to public worship
he primitive church, it was usual for the minister to
, Lift up your hearts; and for the people to reply,
have lifted them up. In this attitude, all our
yers should be presented at the mercy-seat.
4). Boldness and confidence, accompanied with the
e of being heard and answered, is also a prerequisite
acceptable prayer. If any of you lack wisdom, says
nes, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men li-
ally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.
t let him ask in faith, nothing wavering; for he that
vereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind
l tossed: for let not that man think that he shall re-
ve any thing of the Lord. (chap. i. 5—7.) As the
bandman plows and sows in hope, notwithstanding
couraging appearances; so we must pray and wait
hope. The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear
, in them that hope in his mercy. Let those who

seek the Lord believe that he can fulfil all their petitions, and that he will do so, if it be for his glory, and the good of them that seek him.

(5). The expression in the text may denote the proper end of prayer, which is not to draw the divine Being near to us, but ourselves near to him; not that he may be moved, and induced to give, but that we may be suitably prepared to receive. He often waiteth to be gracious, because he is a God of judgment, abounding towards us in all wisdom and prudence. He sees that the desired good is either not good for us, or that it would be better to bestow it at some other time, or in some other way: but in any case he hath not said to the seed of Jacob, seek ye me in vain. The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth: he will fulfil the desire of them that fear him: he also will hear their cry, and will save them. Psal. cxlv. 18, 19.

Lord, let my prayer like incense rise,
Before thy throne above the skies;
And my requests accepted be,
Through Jesus pleading there for me.

When nought but troubles here I find,
Prayer relieves the anxious mind;
By it I cast my care on thee,
Who carest, and wilt care for me.

Thou sovereign Ruler of my heart,
Thy quick'ning grace to me impart;
If this denied, I prayer restrain,
Or pray remissly, and in vain.

SERMON III.

1 John ii. 29.

e know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness, is born of him.

rod is righteous, whether men know it or not; and e who have been taught of him, are well assured of important truth. But the words are more espe- y to be understood as referring to the Mediator, is introduced in the preceding verses; and as our ocate, he is styled Jesus Christ "the righteous." is also called the holy and the just One; and such eally is, both in his original and mediatorial charac- Sin was indeed imputed to him, when he became Surety; yet in him was no sin. His life was free ı blame, and his lips from guile. He is a righteous liator, and a righteous Advocate; sustaining the ts of moral government, and laying all the blame ı the sinner. In his ministry he vindicated the teousness of the law; and by his death he wrought a perfect righteousness for all his people. He suf- l, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to l. He is righteous in all his offices and administra- s. He speaks in righteousness, and is mighty to . Thy throne is for ever and ever; a sceptre of teousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom: thou hast d righteousness, and hatest iniquity. In the most il judgments he inflicts upon the wicked, he does ı no wrong; and all his exercises of mercy are con- nt with the rights of justice. Zion is redeemed

with judgment, and her converts with righteousness. Some of his dealings may be mysterious, but they are founded in wisdom and in equity. Clouds and darkness are round about him, but justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne.

Now if we know that he is righteous, we know also that every one that doeth righteousness, is born of him. The one is as intelligible and as certain as the other.

The great change by which a sinner becomes a saint, is here expressed by being "born of him;" which shows it to be divine, with respect to its Author, and internal, universal, and abiding, with respect to its subject. It is sometimes called, a being born again, to distinguish it from our first birth, or coming into the world. By that we become the children of wrath, and heirs of destruction; by this the children of God, and heirs of eternal life. By that we possessed a corrupt and depraved nature; by this a nature that is divine. It is also called a being born of the water and of the Spirit; intimating, that as water washes the body, so the Spirit purifies and cleanses the soul. It may likewise refer to baptism as an emblem, though not the cause of regeneration. Simon Magus was baptised, but not born again. In the passage under consideration, this change is called a being "born of him;" that is, of Christ Jesus the Lord. Hence he is styled by the prophet, "the everlasting Father;" the progenitor, from age to age, of all his spiritual seed. It is he that passes by us, when polluted in our blood, and says unto us, live! He gave life at first, and gives it more abundantly afterwards.

The great question amongst all serious christians is, whether this change has been experienced or not? Every one, convinced of the importance of true religion, will anxiously enquire for himself, How shall I know that I am born again, that I am born of God?

To this interesting question, a clear and satisfactory

answer is given. "Every one," says the apostle, "who *doeth* righteousness, is born of him." He does not say, every one that hath done righteousness formerly, though he may have left off to do it now, is righteous, nor every one who resolves to do it at some future time; but he that *doeth* righteousness is righteous. He who knows his Master's will, and is ready to perform it; he who makes haste, and delays not to keep his commandments; he who hath his word, and keepeth it, even he it is that loveth him, and is born of God. The language of the slothful servant is, to-morrow and to-morrow; that of the faithful servant is, Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do? Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth. The language of scripture also is, To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth. Seek the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near.

As our real state and character cannot be known by what we did in time past, or by what we may do hereafter; so neither can it be determined merely by what we believe. The apostle does not say, he that believeth righteousness is righteous; but he that *doeth* it. It is not our creed, but our character that decides whether we be born of God. Though the righteousness of Christ is that alone, for the sake of which we are justified and accepted of God, it does not supersede the necessity of a practical regard to his commands; for the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God, let them profess to believe what they may. We must be personally as well as relatively righteous, that we may possess a meetness as well as a title to eternal life.

Let us confine our attention, therefore, simply to the enquiry, *What is it to be a doer of righteousness?*

1. Righteousness is that which in itself is right, or according to the will of God. To do righteousness is

to do that which he commands, whether it relates t moral or positive precepts. What he does and wha he requires is always right, so that we cannot err whil we attend to his requirements, or humbly imitate hi example. He shews us what is good, both by his con duct and by his word. His moral commands, formerl inscribed on tables of stone, and now written by hi Spirit on the fleshly tables of the heart, are full o righteousness, as are also the positive institutions of th gospel; and a cheerful and conscientious compliance with these is called a fulfilling of all righteousness God's revealed will is the only rule of duty; and wha is not prescribed or warranted by the scriptures o truth, can form no part of our obedience. Human in ventions, and uncommanded ceremonies, may have a appearance of wisdom, and of voluntary humility; bu can never be regarded as works of righteousness, no in any other light than as a part of that will-worshi which the Lord abhors, and concerning which he wil say, who hath required these things at your hands The only obedience that can be acceptable, is tha which he himself has commanded. And as many a walk according to this rule, peace be on them, an upon the Israel of God.

2. Doing righteousness includes in it a regard to th rectitude and propriety of what is commanded. Som stumble into the path of duty, and seem to obey Go without design. Virtuous obedience is the effect o rational conviction, and an affectionate concern to d those things which are pleasing in his sight. A goo man thinks on his own ways, and turns his feet to th divine testimonies. Such also is the council given u in the scriptures: "Thus saith the Lord, stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is th good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest fo your souls." We must not only keep God's appoint ments, but obey them *as* his appointments; or, as it i expressed by Job: "Receive, I pray thee, the law fro

his mouth, and lay up his words in thy heart." Though it be his law, we must not receive it at the mouth of man, or on any authority but that which is divine. The Shechemites had no regard to this when they submitted to be circumcised; nor Jehu, when he destsoyed the priests of Baal; nor the Pharisees, when they made long prayers. Though therefore they complied with what was in effect commanded, it was not in a way of righteousness, nor did it partake of the nature of true obedience. It is not the honour or advantage arising from the performance of duty, but its being a divine requirement, and tending to glorify God, that furnishes the motive to obedience, and renders it acceptable in his sight. "When ye fasted and mourned, did ye at all fast unto *me*, even to *me*, saith the Lord?" Zech. vii. 5, 6.

3. The sincerity of our obedience is implied in doing righteousness. Remember, says good Hezekiah, when it was not a time for dissembling, "Remember now, oh Lord, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight." The hypocrite assumes a character which does not belong to him; but the christian is not one who acts a part, or appears to be what he really is not: he is an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile. He obeys from the heart that form of doctrine which is delivered to him in the scriptures. The first command that he complies with is that which is of first importance: Son, give me thy heart: and when this is surrendered, every thing else follows of course. The sincerity of his obedience is also evinced by its universality, having respect unto all the commandments. Genuine obedience includes the whole compass of duty, and esteems God's testimonies concerning all things to be right. The heart that is truly devoted to him, will not start back from any thing that he requires, be it ever so difficult, or contrary to the corrupt inclinations of flesh and blood. Such a one will deny himself, take up

his cross, and follow Jesus; and rather than sacri
good conscience, would consent himself to becom
crifice. Those who wrought righteousness are
have subdued kingdoms, obtained promises,
the mouths of lions, and quenched the violence
and such is still the spirit of faith and of tru
dience. Heb. xi. 33.

4. It includes a patient continuance in well doi
persevering to the end. Wicked men have their
of reflection, their purposes and promises of
amendment; but all their goodness is like the
cloud, and the early dew which passeth away.
christian takes God's testimonies as his herit
ever, and his heart is inclined to perform his
always, even unto the end. His language is like
the Hebrew servant; I love my master, and I w
go out free. True religion is not hot and cold,
and slothful by turns; it is an abiding operative p
ple, tending towards perfection, and leading
native skies. The path of the just is as the sh
light, that shineth more and more unto the p
day. No man having put his hand to the plow,
looking back, is fit for the kingdom of heaven.
only who endure to the end shall be saved. And
work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effe
righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever.

5. Doing righteousness supposes the existence
righteous principle. The tree must be made
before the fruit can be good; the fountain mu
cleansed ere the streams can be pure; and a godly
can only be the effect of a divine nature. The ca
mind is enmity against God; it is not subject to
law, neither indeed can be; so that they who are in
flesh cannot please God. Owing to remaining corr
tion, the best of saints serve God very imperfectly; b
if they were in the flesh, under the dominion of natur
depravity, they could not serve him at all. Every u
converted sinner is in a state of enmity to God, an

re would not serve him if he could; and being
illy dead, he is destitute of a principle of obedi-
If such persons attempt the performance of re-
duties, they go about it as Saul did, when he
himself to offer sacrifice; there is nothing natural,
agreeable, in such sort of services; they are
effect of love, and are neither acceptable to God
. Before we can do the work of righteousness,
st be made righteous, and delight in the law of
ter the inner man. Until we are dead indeed
n, and are quickened together with Christ, we
either live unto God, nor walk in newness of life.
ng made free from sin, we become the servants
teousness, have our fruit unto holiness, and the
erlasting life.

Those only can be said to work righteousness,
place no dependence on the righteousness they
rought. A self-exalting, self-justifying principle
use the box of precious ointment to send forth
ing savour. This it was that marred the doings
Pharisee, who boasted that he was better than
nen, and turned his prayer into sin. He who
s to be justified by his own imperfect obedience,
ours both the Law-giver and the Saviour; and
of working righteousness, aggravates his guilt
ndemnation. God will not own him as a servant,
oes not acknowledge himself to be an unprofitable
or accept any obedience but that which is laid at
t of the cross. Our persons must be accepted,
our services can be so: God had respect unto
and then unto his offering: and both person and
s are accepted only in the Beloved. Faith in
therefore is essential to all true obedience, and
it this it is impossible to please God. Whatso-
not of faith is sin.

e religion we see is not an inactive principle, or
l formality. It does not consist in modes and
or *in empty speculations*; it is the work of faith,

and the labour of love. It is doing the will
from the heart, and doing it with all our migl
then relying on the free grace of God through a
ator, as if we had done nothing. If only he wh
righteousness is righteous, how many professor
ligion have reason to suspect their want of it
nothing but this will stand the test another d
thy words shalt thou be justified, and by thy
shalt thou be condemned. The most diligent
the Lord's servants have reason to mourn ov
deficiencies, and to cry out, God be merciful
sinner. Enter not into judgment with thy s
for in thy sight shall no flesh living be justifie
my soul, stir up the gift that is in thee! Consic
is thy master, and what will be thy reward. E
fruitful in life, and faithful unto death; then sh
receive, through the merits of thy Redeemer, a
of glory that fadeth not away.

Jesus the arduous labour claims,
Both of your hearts and hands;
Ye saints, do homage to his name,
And keep his just commands.

Seek the assistance of his grace,
To make your conscience clean;
Serve him in truth and righteousness,
Renouncing every sin.

Let him your reigning lusts subdue,
To him yourselves resign;
And in subjection to his will,
Let love and duty join.

Thus will a gracious God reward,
The course that you pursue;
Give present proofs of his regard,
And crown with glory too.

SERMON IV.

EZEK. xi. 19.

I will give them one heart.

ALL that is valuable in christian experience, or that is desirable in this world and the next, is in this precious promise. It is the one thing needful, the good part that shall never be taken away from its happy possessor. Did we fully know its importance, our prayer would be, Lord, give me what thou hast promised!

I. Let us consider what is implied in this blessing.

1. When God promises to give his people one heart, it supposes that their heart was previously divided among other objects, and neither devoted to himself, nor united to one another. There was a time when they were not a people, though they are now become the people of God; and at that time they had no heart for him, or for any of the exercises or comforts of the religious life; no heart for prayer or praise, for the duties of the closet, or the ordinances of public worship. Ephraim, says the prophet, is a silly dove, without heart; and the same may be said of all unconverted sinners. They have no understanding in spiritual things; no aptitude or fitness for holy duties; no true wisdom or discretion in the management of their concerns; no courage or fortitude to face an enemy, or to bear up under heavy trials and afflictions. The sinner no longer possesses any heart; he has given it to another. Satan dwells in it as his strong hold, *reigns in it* as his palace, and directs it to

what objects he pleases. He works in the childr disobedience, and leads them captive at his will.

Or if there be any sort of affection for what is g yet the heart of a sinner is still divided, and so sh be found faulty. Hos. x. 2. It is divided between and mammon, sin and holiness; between the trifle vanities of this world, and the blessedness of the r Hence the lives of sinners are full of inconsistencie contradictions, running into opposite extremes, an coming every thing by turns. They are halting in opinions, inconstant in their affections, and unstab their conduct. Now their convictions gain the as dency, and then their corruptions. Sinning and penting, repenting and sinning again, marks their e character. Sin has disjointed the whole frame of heart, made it irresolute and unfixed, emptied it of e thing that is good, and filled it with all manner of So that, according to the testimony of God himself, deceitful above all things, and desperately wicke cage of every foul spirit, and of every unclean hateful bird; and all the imaginations of the though the heart are evil, only evil, and that continually. is a dark and gloomy picture; but the colours are too thick or strongly laid; for God himself is the pai Gen. vi. 5. Psal. xiv 3. Jer. xvii. 9. Matt. xv. Rom. iii. 12—18.

II. Consider the import of the promise its "I wil give them one heart."

Notwithstanding there is a great diversity amo the people of God, there is a oneness of affection terest and design; so that, though they are many, are they one body, and members one of another. " dove, my undefiled, is but one," says Christ. The verning principles and prevailing qualities in the sa under every dispensation, are essentially the s *They* are united to the same head, and are animate

the same spirit; they walk by the same rule, and aim at the same end.—More particularly,—

1. They are of one mind as to the Object of their supreme affections, and the way of acceptance with him. Whatever difference there may be in other respects, they all realise the truth of our Lord's saying, and rejoice in it: "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me." It was he that filled up the immeasurable gulph between God and us, and is become the medium of all divine communications; so that our faith and hope, which ultimately centre in God, are through the Mediator. Unto us there is one God, and one Mediator, the man Christ Jesus. Hence, where the same promise is made in Jer. xxxii. 39, "I will give them one heart," it is added, "and one way;" that is, not only one way of thinking and acting in other respects, but especially one way of approach to God, one way of salvation, and a oneness of heart to walk in it. God in Christ Jesus is the centre where all the saints meet; here all hearts are united, and every desire gratified. And as the kingdom of heaven advances, this union will be increased; for when the Lord shall be king over all the earth, in that day there shall be one Lord, and his name one. Zech. xiv. 9.

2. They are of one heart as to their relation and union to one another. All true believers are united to Christ, and are bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh; and in him they are united to each other. There is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither bond nor free; there is neither male nor female; for they are all one in Christ Jesus. Their outward circumstances and inward dispositions, their mental abilities and spiritual acquirements, may be very different; some rich, and some poor; some weak and ignorant; others wise and intelligent; some babes in Christ, and others young men and fathers; yet they are of one heart and one soul, as to the great *objects of the* christian faith. They all speak

the same thing, and with one mouth glorify God. Bein rooted and built up in Christ Jesus, and established i the faith, they are not shaken by every wind of doctrine nor easily drawn aside by the cunning craftiness o those who lie in wait to deceive. They are one i affection, as well as in judgment, according to the lan guage of the prophet: "I will make them one stick and they shall be one in my hand, saith the Lord." Mutual jealousies shall subside, and former animosities be forgotten. They shall have no separate interests, and therefore no divided affections.

3. This oneness is the fruit of Christ's death; for he died that he might gather together in one, the children of God that are scattered abroad. It also arises from his intercession: I pray, says he, that they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. It is likewise the proper and distinguishing badge of discipleship: By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, says Jesus, if ye love one another. It is a union founded upon truth, and is the fruit of grace: where it is so, it will be abiding, and where it is not so, it will be otherwise. It is not to be expected, however, that good men should all agree in the external forms and minuter parts of religion; but they do agree in this, that minor differences among those who hold the Head, should not diminish their mutual affection.

4. The oneness of heart promised in the text, may farther be distinguished—(1) From a double or divided heart. Some men's affections and desires are scattered amongst a multitude of different objects; but the heart of a christian is in this respect undivided. All the powers and faculties of his soul go one way, tending towards one object. This one thing I do, says Paul. One thing have I desired, says David, and that will I seek after. Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none on earth that I desire besides thee. All

eal saints are united in one hope of their calling; have ll one Lord, one faith, and one rule of obedience. Thus s that promise fulfilled: "David, my servant, shall be ting over them, and they shall have one shepherd; they hall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, nd do them." Ezek. xxxvii. 24.—(2) This oneness f heart may be opposed to every species of guile and ypocrisy. Ye dissembled in your hearts, when ye sent ie unto the Lord your God to pray for you, said Jereiiah to the men of Israel. They professed one thing, nd intended another, covering their base designs with lausible pretences. In opposition to this, the heart hich God gives his people is upright and sincere, free om deceit and guile. Amaziah did that which was ight in the sight of the Lord, but not with a perfect eart; while of Asa it is said, that his heart was perfect vith the Lord all his days. Such also is the difference etween the false and the true believer.—(3) It is opposed to a doubtful and undecided state of mind, such is was found among the children of Israel, when Elijah aid to them, how long do ye halt between two opinions. If the Lord be God, serve him; and if Baal, serve him. Master, I will follow thee, said one to Jesus; but let me first go and bury my father. On the contrary, the oneness of heart here promised is a resolved undivided heart; nor carried away by secular interests or worldly policy, but is under the divine direction and command. My heart is fixed, says David, my heart is fixed; I will sing and give praise. None of these things move me, says Paul; neither count I my life dear to me, so that I may finish my course with joy.—(4) It stands opposed to a fickle and inconstant heart. A man of a gracious disposition will appear for God, when he himself is neglected and forgotten; and for religion, when it is most derided and opposed. He has lift up his hand to God, and he will not go back. He has made his choice, and he will abide by it; has begun his course, and will not forsake it. Oh, my soul! thou hast said unto the

Lord, thou art my Lord. He has closed in with Chri and he will cleave to him with full purpose of hea All true believers may say with the apostle, we are n of them who draw back to perdition, but of them wl believe to the saving of the soul. Declensions a decays there may be; but a total apostasy there sh not be. The heart has surrendered itself to God, a he will watch over and fortify it, till every difficulty surmounted, and final blessedness enjoyed.

III. We must notice the origin of this blessing "*I will give them* one heart," saith the Lord.

The promise is absolute and free, not suspended o any condition to be performed by us. But I will *giv* I will do it when I please, to whom I please, and i what manner I please. I am under no obligation, b what I have laid myself under by a voluntary promis I will do it for my name's sake: the work is mine, an none else can perform it.

1. This blessing is every where ascribed to God i the scriptures, not only incidentally and by implicatio but in plain and direct terms. David acknowledg this when he prays, Create in me a clean heart, God; and renew a right spirit within me! Also, in h last prayer: Give unto Solomon, my son, a perfe heart to keep thy commandments, thy testimonies, a thy statutes. The Lord also claims it as his own pr rogative: A new heart will I give you, and a ne spirit will I put within you, and I will take away t stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a he of flesh. Various means are used to impress the si ner's heart; but God only can renew and sanctify, a make it his own.—1 Chron. xxix. 19. Psal. li. 1 Ezek. xxxvi. 26.

2. It appears from the nature of the change itse *It is called* a creation, a resurrection; and requires *exertion* of the same almighty power as was manifes

:he former of these events, and such as will be dis-
yed in the latter. The excellency and universality
the change bespeak its divine original. The lion is
ned into a lamb; the persecutor becomes a preacher
he faith which once he destroyed; the extortioner
tores his unjust gains; the maniac, who ran among
tombs, crying and cutting himself with stones, now
at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind.
l things are passed away, and all things become new.
ely, then, this cometh forth from the Lord of hosts,
o is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working.
thing short of omnipotence can make the dead sinner
ome a living saint.

3. The former state and character of those on whom
blessing is bestowed. They were careless and in-
entive; they neither saw their need of it, nor were
lined to seek after it. They were weak and impotent;
had robbed them of their innocence, and also of
ir strength. They were stubborn and obstinate; so
from being co-workers with God, they resisted his
erations, and were utterly averse to his gracious de-
gns. They were not only estranged, but alienated
m the life of God, through the ignorance that was
them, by reason of the hardness of their hearts.
'hat was the most eminent christian by nature? His
ill as perverse, affections as carnal, and his inclination
evil as strong as those of other sinners. For we
rselves, not only we believers, but we apostles, were
metime foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers
sts and pleasures, hateful and hating one another.
d such were some of you; but ye are washed, but
are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the
ord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. Till grace
akes a difference, nature makes none. Those hearts
hich are now enflamed with love to God, were once
ll of enmity against him. Those feet which now
ead the narrow path of eternal life, were once wander-
g in the broad road that leadeth to destruction; and

would still have wandered from the way, had not Almighty grace prevented. But God in his infinite mercy said, hitherto have ye gone, but you shall go no farther. If we consider the state of the heathen world, how prejudiced, how riveted and confirmed in their prejudices! Or if the christian world, better instructed, yet equally polluted; enjoying the most excellent means, yet equally averse to the life and power of religion, and absolutely destitute of previous dispositions and qualifications for divine grace; nothing co-operating, every thing opposing. If we consider also the case of persons in the same neighbourhoods, in the same families, sitting under the same ministry, and enjoying the same external advantages; some receive instruction, others reject it; some are hardened, others melted under the word; some are taken, and others left. The means are the same, but they have not the same effect. These things considered, we must surely acknowledge, that every good and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights; and especially that of his own will begat he us with the word of truth.

Let us seek this gift from God; seek it by prayer and supplication, in all the appointed means. Here God must do every thing; we can destroy ourselves, but he alone can help us. We can fit ourselves for hell; but he must meeten us for heaven. Let ministers preach, and people hear, in dependence upon him. The operations of the Holy Spirit upon the mind are compared to the blowing of the wind; and though we cannot command the wind which God holds in his fists, and brings out of his treasures, yet we can pray for it, and wait for it; and they shall not be ashamed that wait for him.

Let those who possess in any degree that heart which God hath promised to his people, thankfully acknowledge the heavenly gift. Let them say, as Hezekiah did: The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day. It is not enough to sing forth, we must also

forth his praises, who hath called us out of dark-
into his marvellous light. Let us not sacrifice to
own net, nor burn incense to our own drag; but let
who hath done the work have all the glory.
becomes us also carefully to avoid every thing that
ntrary to that unity of spirit which God has so gra-
ly promised to his people, and all those causes of
and contention which would interrupt the har-
among christians. The beginning of strife is as
one letteth out water; therefore leave off conten-
before it be meddled with. Be moderate in your
ares, refrain from opprobrious language, and evil
isings. Beware of confining your regard, or ap-
riating religion to a party; endeavour always to
tain the unity of spirit in the bond of peace.—
. ii. 1—11.

Let party names no more
The christian world o'erspread;
Gentile and Jew, and bond and free,
Are one in Christ their head.

Among the saints on earth,
Let mutual love be found;
Heirs of the same inheritance,
With mutual blessings crown'd.

Let envy, child of hell,
Be banished far away;
Those should in strictest friendship dwell,
Who the same Lord obey.

Thus shall the church below
Resemble that above,
Where streams of pleasure ever flow,
And every heart is love.

SERMON V.

1 THESSALONIANS v. 16.

Rejoice evermore.

No less than seven distinct and important d are clustered together in so many verses in this nection, and each expressed with a kind of stuc brevity. That under immediate consideration, is which is often inculcated, and but seldom practi Real christians are very rare, and joyful ones are more so. Most of them hang their harps upon willows, and weep when they remember Zion. T have abundant cause for joy however, though may often want a suitable frame for it. The p leges which such possess, and the prospects they l before them, are sufficient to excite the most li emotions of gratitude and praise.

The duty and the privilege to which believers here invited, require to be explained—the neces dispositions pointed out—and the sources of their p sure ascertained and distinguished. Let us atten a few remarks on each of these in their order.

I. Explain the exhortation.

It is evident that it cannot be understood universa or without restriction. The present life is not a s of unmixed joy, nor is it any kind of joy that is l intended.

1. It must be carefully distinguished from levity, sinful mirth; nothing of this kind must enter into composition. Our joy must always be tempered w

religion, and moderated by prudence. Light mindedness and vanity are utterly inconsistent with the genius of christianity, and repugnant to our spiritual interests. "I said of laughter," says Solomon, "it is mad: and of mirth, what doeth it? For as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fool: this also is vanity." It is also observed by an apostle, that neither foolish talking nor jesting are convenient to a christian; and certainly, nothing is more injurious to ourselves or others. Gravity mixed with serenity and cheerfulness, becomes both the man and the christian.

2. In all our rejoicing, we are not at any time to drown our sorrow in the gratification of the senses. We may enjoy the comforts of life, or they would have been bestowed in vain; but we must use them as not abusing them, knowing that the fashion of this world passeth away. Moderation and self-denial are duties of great importance, and to the christian they are indispensable. Our appetites are apt to exceed their proper bounds, and therefore need a restraint; so that the liberty with which we are graciously indulged, may not degenerate into licentiousness. Carnal men are averse to every thing of a serious nature; hence when any thoughts about a future state intrude into their minds, they treat them as unwelcome guests, and endeavour to get rid of them by amusements and diversions, reveling and banqueting, luxury and temperance; but the temporary satisfaction obtained in this way, ends in disappointment and remorse. Amidst such "laughter, the heart is sorrowful; and the end of that mirth is heaviness." Prov. xiv. 13.

3. The joy to which we are invited is not intended to render us insensible to affliction, or to exclude those feelings which are congenial with a state of distress. Sensations suited to our circumstances, so far from being criminal or unbecoming, are highly commendable. There is a happy medium between impenitent indifference, and a being swallowed up of over much sorrow.

"Despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him." It was a complaint alleged against the children of Israel, by the prophet Jeremiah; "O Lord, are not thine eyes upon the truth? Thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction. They have made their faces harder than a rock, they have refused to return." To brave it out, under divine rebukes, as if pain were no pain, or affliction no affliction, is such a supercilious contempt of God as will provoke him to continue our troubles, if not to multiply and render them still more awful. If we do not flinch at one rod, he will take a bundle of rods, and see what that will do.

4. From these remarks it will appear that we are not to expect uninterrupted enjoyment in the present life. Assurance of the divine favour is a rich and valuable plant; but it will not thrive in every soil. Every christian has a foundation for this joy, but every one does not experience it; or if it be so occasionally, it is not constant and abiding. David's mountain stood strong; but when the Lord hid his face he was troubled. The favourable gale which he had before enjoyed, was now turned to an unfriendly blast; and he who had been exulting in his own stability, and in the love of God, now cries out, Is his mercy clean gone for ever; will he be favourable no more? Nothing is more stedfast than the christian's state; in this respect he is like Mount Zion that cannot be moved: but there is nothing more changeable than his frames and feelings; and in that respect he is like a reed shaken with the wind. Extraordinary elevations have been followed by extraordinary depression and despondency; hence while we are exhorted to rejoice always, we are also told not to be high-minded, but fear.

II. Consider the dispositions to be cultivated, in order to a high degree of religious enjoyment.

1. It becomes us to guard against whatever might interrupt such a state of mind, or render us incapable of holy satisfaction and delight. Sin especially, the never-failing source of sorrow, must be carefully avoided, and even the appearance of evil. The wine of heavenly consolation is poured into none but clean vessels; and it is no longer than while we keep ourselves unspotted from the world, that we can expect to possess a happy frame of mind. The moment guilt is contracted, our peace is gone; and it is not till the former is removed, that the latter can be restored. The reproaches of our own heart will embitter every enjoyment; and though all the world should pronounce us happy, we shall in such a situation find ourselves extremely miserable. A conscience void of offence, an inward subjection to the divine will, and an outward conversation becoming the gospel, are essential to spiritual peace and joy.

2. Divine interpositions in our favours should be carefully noticed, whether in a way of providence or grace. The Lord keeps a book of remembrance, in which he records the sincere breathings, the upright intentions, and pious though imperfect services of his people; and they should keep a book of remembrance, to record the many seasonable appearances, the numerous undeserved and unexpected mercies, which they have received at his hands. Thus we hear of Hezekiah's writing his experience when he was sick, and recording the goodness of the Lord towards him. David also, when the Lord had forgiven all his iniquities and healed all his diseases, calls upon his soul and all that is within him to bless his holy name, and not to forget his benefits. As God treasures up our tears, so ought we to treasure up his mercies; and not so to pore upon our infirmities, as to forget our enjoyments. David entitles the thirty eighth psalm, a psalm to bring to remembrance; and Paul makes grateful mention of an extraordinary rapture and revelation, with which he *had been favoured* fourteen years before. From what

God has already done, we may be convinced, not only of what he can do, but of what he will do for us, if we continue to put our trust in him. Where he begins to be gracious, he will continue to be so, and will not forsake the work of his own hands. Judges xiii. 23.

3. It is necessary to watch and pray against a spirit of murmuring and unbelief. Joy and discontent are inimical to each other; and while we indulge a fretful and uneasy temper, it is impossible that we should find comfort in God, in ourselves, or in any thing else. In our deepest affliction it becomes us to entertain honourable thoughts of him, to put the most favourable construction on the mysterious parts of his conduct towards us, and not to harbour any distrust of his wisdom, mercy, or truth. And though we are not required to be pleased with misery or pain, yet in the greatest extremity we should in patience possess our souls. It was doubtless by cultivating this disposition, that an apostle could say, "As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing."

4. It is equally necessary to guard against unreasonable doubts and fears about our spiritual state, if we would enjoy the comforts of the gospel. O ye of little faith, said our Lord to his disciples, wherefore did you doubt? As there is that maketh himself rich, and yet hath nothing; so there is that maketh himself poor, and yet hath great riches. The latter is to be avoided as well as the former; for the christian who is ever doubting of his state, can enjoy but little comfort. His tears will drown his triumphs, and his lamentations silence all his songs. His fears will weaken his faith; and whilst labouring under an apprehension that the threatenings of the divine word are levelled against him, he can scarcely take any comfort from the promises. As an antidote against disquietude, the psalmist encourages himself to hope in God; and in proportion to the confidence we place in him, such will be our peace and joy. In another place he says, I had fainted,

ıless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord ı the land of the living. In the exercise of a strong ıd lively faith, amidst the most threatening appearıces, we may sing with David and with Luther, "God our refuge and strength, a very present help in ouble; therefore will not we fear, though the earth e removed, and though the mountains be carried into ıe midst of the sea." Psal. xlvi. 1, 2.

5. The assistance of the Holy Spirit, who is the only fficient cause of peace and joy, must be fervently nplored. He is truly and eminently styled the Comorter; it is he alone who can raise us above our fears, ınd shed abroad the love of God in our hearts. His it is o discover to us the freeness, fulness, and all-sufficiency of Christ as a Saviour, and to draw forth those dispositions which shall fill us with all joy and peace in believing. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, and faith. David lso unites these things together in his penitential rayer: "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, nd uphold me with thy free Spirit." The withdrawıent of divine influences either leaves us in a state of upidity, or overwhelms us with distress; and we have either help nor hope from any other quarter. Cast ıe not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy pirit from me.

III. We are to notice the reasons which should ender our joy permanent.

We are not only to rejoice, but to rejoice "evermore." Some duties are to be performed at particular imes and seasons, and under peculiar circumstances; ut this is a duty never out of season, to be continued hrough life, and even in death itself. The strong hout aloud for joy, and the weak should lisp his praise. Godly sorrow, instead of being an impediment, is a reparative to spiritual joy. Whilst on earth, the ilest sinner has reason to rejoice that he is out of hell;

and the most afflicted saint, that he is not made as miserable as he has made himself sinful. The Lord hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.

There are times indeed which more especially call for gratitude and joy, and every thing is beautiful in its season. In the day of prosperity, says Solomon, be joyful; but in the day of adversity, consider. The period of our conversion is called the day of our espousals; and that also is a time for gladness of heart. The Eunuch, when he had found the Saviour, went on his way rejoicing; and when Samaria received the word there was great joy in that city. Times of general revival, and of special favour to individuals, require to be distinguished by special returns of gratitude and praise. Lord, wilt thou not revive us again, that thy people may rejoice in thee? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us! Thou hast put more gladness in my heart, than in the time when their corn and their wine increased.

Yet there is no time in which this holy and happy frame of mind would be unsuitable—(1) Because the sources of spiritual joy are unchangeably the same: the love, the purpose, and the promises of God are without variableness, or the least shadow of turning. The blood of Jesus Christ his Son never loses its virtue; and the efficacy of his Holy Spirit is evermore the same. The grace imparted in this world, and the glory promised in the next, are secured by immutable faithfulness and truth.—(2) The benefit arising from this holy joy, affords a powerful inducement for its continued preservation. "The joy of the Lord is our strength;" it is that which quickens and invigorates all the other graces, and gives a fresh impulse to every holy duty. It lightens our troubles, sweetens all our mercies, and gives glory to God.—(3) It will be the work of heaven itself, and should be our employment in the way to it. It is here the foretaste of what will be hereafter, when

shall sing the song of Moses and the Lamb. A
y man is never so like a holy angel, nor so like the
y God himself, as when he is in a humble cheerful
ne of heart. God rejoices in himself, and he loves
: his people should rejoice in him.
[ow happy and how desirable is the state of a true
ever! He has real joy in possession, and greater
in prospect. There are some things that he may
ice in, as being good in themselves; and others
: he may rejoice over, as being made subservient to
nterest. Primitive christians could rejoice even in
ulation itself, knowing that tribulation worketh pa-
ce, and patience experience, and experience hope.
l we know that all things work together for good, to
n that love God, to them who are the called accord-
to his purpose. Let them rejoice therefore ever-
e, and in every thing give thanks; for this is the
of God in Christ Jesus concerning them.

Long have I on the willows hung
  This tuneless harp of mine;
Stupid my heart, and slow my tongue,
  Unfit for songs divine.

And shall I ever thus remain,
  So dark, so sad, and dull?
Awake my powers! Though streams are low,
  The fountain's ever full.

With new displays of pardoning love,
  I will my songs renew;
And could I feel as angels feel,
  I'd sing as angels do.

SERMON VI.

1 Thessalonians v. 17.

Pray without ceasing.

Holy joy makes prayer a delight, and fer prayer is a preparative for joy. Prayer engages divine presence, and that becomes a source of highest enjoyment. In the day when I cried, thou sweredst me; and strengthenedst me with strength my soul. Prayer draws grace into exercise, and plenishes the means of our satisfaction. Sin is destr tive of enjoyment; but prayer is the antidote of and of those anxious cares which interrupt our tr quillity. The sweetest life that we can live, is to careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer supplication, to make our requests known unto G Prayer and rejoicing have a reciprocal influence each other; and it is thus that the preceding vers intimately connected with the present. Those w pray without ceasing, are likely to rejoice everm and the greater pleasure and satisfaction we find religion, the more ready shall we be to engage in t holy exercise.

In prayer we have more immediately to do with Go it is therefore one of the most spiritual and sole duties in which we can be concerned, and can only properly performed by those who are spiritual. Sa while a pharisee had doubtless heard and read muc had fasted often, given many alms to the poor, and ha

also made many prayers; yet not till he was converted, did he pray in earnest, or offer that prayer which goeth not out of feigned lips. Then it was said to Ananias, Behold, he prayeth! All that went before did not deserve the name of prayer. The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord; but the prayer of the upright is his delight.

Prayer is a duty of such great importance, that God has appointed a considerable part of one day in the week, and some part of every day, for its performance. He also erected his temple for that very purpose; for my house, says he, shall be called a house of prayer unto all people. The influence of prayer is such that it enables us to overcome the greatest difficulties, to obtain the choicest comforts, and subdue the most formidable enemies. We may also have power with God, and prevail as Jacob did, if we weep and make supplication unto him.

We have a beautiful and comprehensive description of this sacred duty in our Catechism: 'Prayer,' say the Compilers of that excellent compendium, 'is the offering up of our desires to God.' It is the act of a needy indigent creature, seeking relief from the fountain of mercy. A sense of want excites desire, and desire is the very essence of prayer. One thing have I desired of the Lord, says David; that will I seek after. Prayer without desire is like an altar without a sacrifice, or without the fire from heaven to consume it. When all our wants are supplied, prayer will be turned into praise: till then we must live by prayer, and dwell at the mercy-seat. God only is able to hear and to help us; his goodness emboldens us to ask, and his ability encourages us to hope for all we need. O thou that hearest prayer; unto thee shall all flesh come!

The catechism farther teaches us, that prayer is offered up 'by the assistance of the Holy Spirit.' He is the great agent in the world of grace, and his influence is especially necessary in the duty of prayer. It

is he that excites the disposition, and that furnishes both matter and manner. For we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Hence he is called the Spirit of grace and of supplications; for he it is that enables us to draw near to God, filling our mouth with arguments, and teaching us to order our cause before him. Zech. xii. 10. Rom. viii. 26.

Prayer is to be offered 'for things agreeable to the divine will.' This is particularly mentioned by the apostle: This is the confidence, says he, that we have in him, that if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us. And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions which we desired of him. Our prayers must therefore be regulated by the revealed will of God, and come within the compass of the promises; these are to be the matter and the ground of our supplications. What God has not promised, he may possibly bestow; but what he has promised, he will be sure to perform. Of the good things promised to Israel, not one failed; all of them came to pass; and in due time the same shall be said of all the rest.

It must also be 'in the name of Christ believing;' placing in him all our hope of acceptance, and exercising an unfeigned confidence in his atoning sacrifice and prevailing intercession. In this we should imitate Samuel the prophet, who took a lamb and offered it for a burnt offering, and then cried unto the Lord; and the Lord heard him. No favour is to be expected from God, unless the eye of faith be directed to the great oblation. Even the intercession of Christ is founded on the sacrifice which he himself offered; and ours can have no other plea. Referring to the great day of atonement, when he should enter into the holy place, and appear in the presence of God for us, our great High Priest has said, "In that day ye shall ask me

nothing: verily, verily I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you." John xvi. 23.

All this must be accompanied 'with confession of our sins, and thankful acknowledgment of God's mercies.' These are two necessary adjuncts of prayer. I prayed, says Daniel, and made confession. Sin is a burden; confession unloads the soul of that burden. Father, says the Prodigal, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight. Thanksgiving also is as needful as confession; by the one we take shame to ourselves, and by the other we give glory to God. By the one we abase the creature; by the other we exalt the Creator. The latter is indeed the most excellent part of prayer: in petition we act like dependent creatures, in confession like sinners, but in thanksgiving like angels.

We shall now attempt—farther to explain the exhortation—and consider the motives by which it is enforced.

I. Explain the exhortation: what is it to "pray without ceasing?"

There are some kinds of prayer, from which it would be our happiness to cease—cold, dead, formal and faithless prayer. These are vain oblations, which God abhors. But the prayer here recommended is earnest, humble, and affectionate; and to present this without ceasing, is to be unceasingly blessed. However, this does not imply that we should be always praying; for though this would be desirable, it is scarcely possible; neither our natural strength, nor the common duties of life would admit. Though prayer is a great work, and a necessary work, it is not our only work. Nor is it designed to exclude other duties, either civil or religious, but to become a preparative for all. But to pray without ceasing, implies—

1. A readiness to engage in this exercise at all times

and in all places; in the closet, in the family, and in the church of God. Praying, as the apostle calls it, with all prayer and supplication; both public and private, personal and social, and on every suitable occasion. For this purpose it will be necessary to observe the openings of providence, and tenderly to regard the inward admonitions to this important duty. There are times and seasons in which the Lord in effect says Seek ye my face; and our heart should be ready to reply with David, Thy face, Lord, will I seek. In ejaculatory prayer especially, we may pour out our souls unto God at all times, both when we go out and when we come in, when sitting in the house or walking by the way; this kind of sacred intercourse is neither confined to time or place. Here we may pray while travelling from one place to another, as Abraham's servant did in his way to the city of Nahor; in the field of battle, as Asa did, and in the face of an enemy; in the presence of a great king, as Nehemiah did while standing before Artaxerxes; nay, in the belly of hell, as Jonah did; and the Lord will not despise our prayer. Nor is it excluded by any business or employment: we may read, hear, meditate, walk, labour; and while our hands are employed in the concerns of this life, our hearts may be with God, and holy communion be maintained with him. Thus also we might pass some part of our sleepless nights to great advantage, and find as David did, that our prayers in the night will furnish us with songs in the night. Something like this is intimated in the following words: "How precious are thy thoughts unto me, O God; how great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with thee." O how desirable to have our thoughts thus full of God, in the day time, and in the night season! Then should we enjoy the light of his countenance, and have constant fellowship with him. Psal. xlii. 8. cxxxix. 17, 18.

2. To pray without ceasing, we must improve every

favourable opportunity for that purpose, and watch for those occasions which may furnish us with some special message to the throne of grace. Nothing of importance should be undertaken without prayer; and that which will not admit our seeking a blessing upon it, should not be undertaken at all. We should pray over mercies, that they may be sanctified; and under our afflictions, that they may be removed. Whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, all must be sanctified by the word of God and prayer. When Paul took bread in the company of heathen strangers, he gave thanks to God in presence of them all. Before we enter on the business of the day, or retire to our rest at night, our prayer should be offered to the God of our salvation. In adversity, that we may not sink under it; in prosperity, that we may not be elated with it; in the one that we may not forget God, and in the other that we may not be forgotton by him. Those who preach the word should be careful to precede and follow it with prayer, and those who hear should do the same. God forbid, says Samuel, that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you; and then he adds, but I will teach you the good and the right way. Our living breath and dying breath should be spent in prayer; and then our whole life will be a life of praise. Many of the saints have left us an example of this habitual devotion. Daniel prayed three times a day; and says David, seven times a day will I praise thee, and call upon thee as long as I live. Of the devout Centurion it is said, that he gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always. Those are best prepared for every other duty, and for prayer itself, who keep the wheels constantly in motion; and the more any man does for God, the more he may. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. A pious mind will turn every thing into an occasion for prayer, and bring all its cares and concerns to the mercy-seat. There is a pleasure *in making known* to God the most trivial as well as the

most important circumstances, with all the secret and desires of the heart.

3. The exhortation teaches us to be impor and to pray without ceasing, till the ends of pra answered. The Lord loves that his people shoul with him; and though he bears long with them, at last avenge his own elect, who cry day and nig him. When Peter was kept in prison, pray made without ceasing of the church unto God f till an angel was sent to deliver him. Request fo upon request, and supplication after supplicatio the Lord was intreated to be gracious, and to giv the desire of their hearts. Paul also sought th thrice, or probably three whole days, that the mes of Satan might depart from him; and at length ol in answer, My grace is sufficient for thee; my s as made perfect in weakness. No wonder there exhorts the believing Romans to continue ins prayer; he had done so himself, and reaped the l We must be cautioned however againt too eagerness on the one hand, and despondency other; if we pray without ceasing, we must no to wait the Lord's time for an answer, and bles all they that wait for him. His blessings are waiting for; and the longest voyages generall the richest returns. Men ought therefore al pray, and not to faint. Luke xviii. 1—7.

4. We are to cherish a prayerful dispositio times, as well as when we are actually engaged duty itself; so that we may find it easy and fam us to draw near to God, and dwell near the merc like a child at home. The fire must be kept b upon the altar, ready for another sacrifice af former has been consumed; and when the to silent, the heart should be preserved in a huml heavenly frame, to be lifted up to God, upon emergency. Thus when the opportunity for pr over, the affection may still remain. It is pr

that this sweet and heavenly disposition, so acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, is intended in the commendation given to the church of old, when he says, Thy lips, oh, my spouse, drop as the honey-comb; honey and milk are under thy tongue, and the smell of thy garments is like the smell of Lebanon. By being thus kept in a praying frame, we are also kept in the fear of the Lord all the day long.—Cant. iv. 11. Prov. xxiii. 27.

II. Consider the motives which should lead to this important duty.

Prayer is in itself a becoming acknowledgment of the all-sufficiency of God, and of our dependence upon him. It is the means appointed for the obtaining both temporal and spiritual blessings. The Lord could bless us in another way; but he will be inquired of, to do those things for us which we need. Or if the blessing be withheld or denied, prayer enables us to bear the denial; and if it be bestowed, it makes it doubly sweet. Hope deferred, maketh the heart sick; but when the desire cometh, it is a tree of life.—More particularly,

1. We sin without ceasing, and therefore have need to pray without ceasing. Till we cease to sin, we must never cease to pray; both that past sins may be pardoned, and future ones prevented. Corruption is ever irritating, and we must ever be intreating strength against it. Without prayer, both the guilt and power of sin would be continually increasing. It was this consideration that brought David often upon his knees, crying out at one time, Pardon mine iniquity, for it is great; and at another, Keep back thy servant from presumptuous sins, let them not have dominion over me.

2. Our enemies never cease to assault and oppose us, hoping finally to prevail. Our hands therefore should be lifted up like those of Moses, till the conflict is decided, and the victory proclaimed. Our enemies are

ever watchful, and we must be the same; and to watchfulness, prayer must be united. The latter, without the former, is hypocritical and presumptuous; the former, without the latter, is vain and ineffectual. Hence, after a beautiful description of the christian armour, and an exhortation to put it on, the apostle adds, Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit.—Ephes. vi. 18.

3. Both our afflictions and necessities return without ceasing. Every day brings fresh wants; every duty calls for fresh supplies. We are scarcely out of one trouble, but we are plunged into another. Deep calleth unto deep, at the noise of God's water-spouts, till all his waves and billows are gone over us. Bodily pain and sickness, inward grief and anguish, the unkindnesses of friends, worldly disappointments, and the ten thousand evils attendant on the present life, call for persevering and incessant prayer. Is any afflicted, says an apostle, let him pray. And who is not grieved, not afflicted, not distressed? And who then can live without prayer?

4. God never ceases, but ever waits, to be gracious. He is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth; and while his mercy holds out, it is an encouragement to hold out in prayer, for his mercy endureth for ever. Our Advocate ever liveth to make intercession for us, and the way into the holiest of all is made plain. The Holy Spirit never ceases to help the infirmities of his praying people; his grace is still the same, and all-sufficient. Let us therefore come with boldness and constancy to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in every time of need.

5. We should not suffer prayer to cease before its time; for when it has once ceased, it will cease for ever. We had need be much in prayer now, and improve the present opportunity; for in a little time our [illegible]ng seasons will all be over. Now only is the

ted time, and this is the day of salvation. It was lvice given by one of the martyrs to a friend in n Mary's time, 'Pray, pray, pray;' and there are ood men but who in their last hours have reason sh that they had prayed more. But oh how awful ose who live without prayer, and of whom it shall d another day, Then shall they call upon me, but not answer; they shall seek me early, but they not find me: for that they hated knowledge, and ot choose the fear of the Lord! Prov. i. 24—33.

For thee, my God, may my whole soul,
  Bound by a thousand ties,
Be firmly fixed, and day by day
  To greater nearness rise.

Be gone, vain world, with all thy charms,
  Nor more disturb my peace;
Ye inward lusts, infernal powers,
  Your fruitless efforts cease.

Fly swiftly hence, ye joys of sense,
  Let every sin depart;
The God of heaven asserts his claim,
  And grace commands my heart.

SERMON VII.

1 THESSALONIANS v. 18.

In every thing give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

WE read of thank-offerings under the law; and God forbid that they should be wanting under the brighter and better dispensation of the gospel. From the connection of this verse with the foregoing, there can be no doubt that the praying christian will be a thankful one; and that blessings received in answer to prayer, ought to dispose us to more than ordinary thankfulness.

Here we have a duty enjoined—its extent described—and a powerful motive urged for its performance.

1. The duty prescribed is Thanksgiving.

Gratitude must not only be felt, but expressed, in thanksgiving, as a part of that religious worship which we owe to the supreme Being for his innumerable mercies. Ingratitude is a sin against the light and law of nature; and it is a charge brought against the heathen world, that when they knew God they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful. And it is the character of all wicked men that they are "unthankful unholy." In this they are reproved by the fowls of the air, and the beasts of the field; for the ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; though they do not appear to know, neither do they consider.

But praise is especially comely for the upright; and those whose hearts the Lord hath opened to love him, *should* have their tongues loosed to praise him. Having received more than others, it becomes them to be more

thankful; abounding mercies call for abundant praise. They are also better capacitated for this heavenly employment; they have the Spirit to teach them, grace to assist, and the most enlarged expectations to excite unceasing praise.

Some, perhaps, would say, but I am in want of almost every earthly comfort—I am destitute of some of the common necessaries of life; how then should I be thankful? Yet Paul could say, I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound; every where and in all things I am instructed, both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. And though he appeared as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing. This is a lesson, however, which he had learned by experience, not what he had by nature; and though he could do these things, it was only through Christ strengthening him.

Another, perhaps, will say, I have been long exercised with sore afflictions; my health affected, my worldly substance diminished, my friends alienated, my character injured; and, what is more than all, my evidences clouded, and my soul wrapt up in the dark night of desertion. Without referring to scripture examples of submission and contentment, even in such circumstances, it is only necessary to enquire, are our afflictions equal to our deserts? If not, let us still be thankful, and adore. Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins? Things are never so bad with us but they might have been worse; and every thing short of endless destruction is matter of mere favour, and calls for gratitude and praise.

Sin is the greatest hindrance to this heavenly temper; and when burdened with a sense of inward depravity, an evil heart of unbelief departing from the living God, and great insensibility and hardness, we are but ill prepared for a thank-offering. At such times we are ready *to exclaim, with* the Psalmist, Innumerable evils have

compassed me about; mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more in number than the hairs of my head, therefore my heart faileth me.—Yet even this may furnish matter for thankfulness; for, though all men are depraved, all are not sensible of it, and do not mourn over it. It is a blessed thing if we can sorrow after a godly sort, and feel sin to be our constant grief and burden; for they that sow in tears shall reap in joy, and shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing their sheaves with them.

II. The extent of this duty is to be considered; "in every thing" give thanks.

There is no condition of life, no circumstance that can occur, but what may furnish some occasion for gratitude and praise. Under all the dispensations of providence, in prosperity and in adversity, in sickness and in health, in honour and disgrace, there is always something to be thankful for, some expression of divine goodness intermingled with our deepest afflictions. All will acknowledge, that when things go well with them, and their sun shines with unclouded lustre, it is their duty to be thankful, and perhaps they find a corresponding disposition: but is the great God worthy of no honour or affection when he puts on an angry look, or assumes the chastening rod? He, who nobly said, Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him, said also in another place, The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, and blessed be the name of the Lord. Is he not the same in himself, and deserving the same homage from us, when he smites as when he heals, when he plunges us into trouble, as well as when he delivers us out of it? When we can bless God in our afflictions, it is a sign that our afflictions are blessed: when we can glory in tribulations, our tribulations become our glory. Our trials may be great; but what are our transgressions? If we have lost many of our comforts, have we

not more left, both in number and value? Let our sufferings be what they may, they are nothing in comparison of the misery we have deserved, or the glory which shall be revealed in us. Such was the reckoning of an apostle, yea, of a prophet also, after he had considered all the temporal evils that could befal him; vines and fig-trees blasted, fields become barren, and flocks and herds destroyed; yet, says he, will I rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of my salvation. As a holy martyr said of queen Mary, 'If she release me, I will thank her; if she imprison me, I will thank her; if she burn me, I will thank her;' so should every believer say of God. Let him do what he will with me, I will still be thankful. Much of this lovely spirit was found in the primitive church; for we are told that it was customary in those days, when christians met in the street, and heard either good or bad news, to say, thanks be to God!—Hab. iii. 17, 18. Rom. viii. 18.

This grateful temper is to pervade every religious duty that we perform, as well as accompany all our sufferings and enjoyments. We are required not only to continue in prayer, but to watch in the same with thanksgiving; not only to receive the word, but to receive it gladly; and to be thankful that it has not only reached our ears, but also our hearts. In our attendance on public worship, it becomes us to say, This is the day which the Lord hath made, we will rejoice and be glad in it; let us enter his courts with thanksgiving, and his gates with praise. Especially when we attend the ordinance of the Supper, to commemorate the dying love of our Redeemer, our hearts should overflow with gratitude and love to Him who died for us. If any duty excludes the immediate exercise of this heavenly temper, it seems to be when we humble ourselves before God in penitential confession of our sins. This requires shame, sorrow, self-abhorrence, and indignation; yet it is as much our duty to rejoice in God, as to mourn before him; and to exalt his mercy, as well as to tremble

at his wrath. These sentiments were united in Daniel's prayer: "O Lord, says he, to us belongeth confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against thee. To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him." We deserve to be consumed, but we are not; let us therefore be thankful. We should rejoice that there is a Saviour, whether we can call him our Saviour or not; that there is a heavenly inheritance, though we have many doubts about our title to it; and that God will be glorified, though we and all the world should be destroyed.

3. Thankfulness should be expressed by every possible means, as well as on all occasions. If our tongues be thus employed, they will become our glory; but if otherwise, our disgrace. While the tongues of the wicked are employed as if they were set on fire of hell, those lips which have been touched as with a live coal from God's altar, are required to shew forth his praise. We cannot but speak, says the apostle, the things which we have seen and heard. If God speaks to us from heaven, and Christ speaks for us in heaven, we should speak for both on earth. It was the prayer of the Psalmist, Open thou my lips, and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise. The language of the apostles also breathes the same spirit, and expressions like the following are to be met with in various parts of their writings; "Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory—Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift—Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings—who hath begotten us again to a lively hope." Such language becomes the lips of the redeemed; and let the children of Zion be joyful in their King.

4. Our whole lives should be devoted to his praise. Every power of the mind—every disposition requires to be so exercised, and every action so performed, that *God in all things* may be glorified. Such is the end of

our high vocation; Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of Him, who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. As every thing praise-worthy is derived from him, so it ought to be ascribed to him, that he may have all the glory. Nothing is to be done in order that men may think the better of us, but every thing that they may think the better of God. Our mercies are not only to be acknowledged, but improved; and this is a more excellent way of expressing our gratitude. "Whoso offereth praise, glorifieth me; and to him that ordereth his conversation aright, will I shew the salvation of God." The former is acceptable, but the latter is much more so; and good works, rather than good words, are the offering which he requires. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples. Psal. L. 23. John xv. 8.—We are next to consider,

III. The reason given for the duty itself: "This is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you."

1. It is the will of God, and that is reason sufficient for the observance of every command. He intends that his people should be a thankful people, and therefore he will make them so; he also requires them to be thankful, and has furnished them with sufficient motives for that purpose. And his revealed will is to be complied with, not because it suits our interest or inclination, but because it is his will, and from a regard to his authority. He who has said, thou shalt not steal, has also said, in every thing give thanks; and this is warrant enough for those who love him, and who seek his glory.

2. It is the will of God in Christ Jesus; not only revealed and made known through a Mediator, but the abundant grace displayed through that medium, lays a foundation for unceasing praise. Our sacrifices of thanksgiving are also to be offered in his name, depend-

ing alone on his atonement and intercession for acceptance with God. Without this neither ourselves nor any thing we do can be pleasing in his sight. By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name. For ye are a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Heb. xiii. 15. 1 Pet. ii. 5.

Praising and loving God is a distinguishing evidence of grace. We may attend to other duties from very inferior motives; but this is an exercise of the heart, and it is that which he requires. It is however much easier to obtain blessings from God, than to be thankful for them. To cultivate this spirit, it is necessary to consider both our sins and our mercies, and to labour after low thoughts of ourselves, and high thoughts of God. Above all, we need the quickening influences of the Holy Spirit; for none can sanctify the Lord God of hosts in their hearts, till their hearts are sanctified by him. Our most elevated praises and thanksgivings will be no better than solemn mockery without this, and we ourselves shall be regarded only as sounding brass or a tinkling symbol. Israel of old remembered, that God was their rock, and the high God their redeemer; nevertheless, they flattered him with their mouth, and lied unto him with their tongues; for their heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant. Psal. lxxviii. 35—37.

Praise the eternal Three,
Who form'd the glorious scheme
To set the happy captives free,
Lost sinners to redeem.

Praise his unbounded love,
From whom all blessings flow,
This work will never cease above;
Begin it here below.

To your incarnate God,
Your tuneful voices raise;
Come spread his honours all abroad,
In strains of lofty praise.

SERMON VIII.

1 THESSALONIANS v. 19.

Quench not the Spirit.

THIS short, but comprehensive exhortation, very naturally follows the preceding; for if we would rejoice evermore, pray without ceasing, and in every thing give thanks, we must not quench the Spirit, whose influence is essential to the performance of each of these duties.

Previous to an explanation of the particular precept enjoined, and the motives by which it is enforced, it will be necessary to attend to a few general remarks on the subject.

1. The holy Spirit of God, who is the great agent in the work of sanctification, is figuratively represented as fire, or the source of light and heat to the christian world. This is evidently implied in the word "quench," which can relate only to something which really is, or which resembles fire. Hence it was foretold by John, that Jesus should baptize his disciples with the Holy Ghost, and with fire; and when the day of pentecost was fully come, this promise was fulfilled. For suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting; and there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as *of fire, and they* were all filled with the Holy Ghost.

This emblem may hold forth to us the clearness *urity, and* splendour of those divine illuminations wh

proceed from the Spirit of God. Is fire of a searching penetrating quality? So also are the operations of this heavenly agent; for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. He is also the fountain of light and life to all his people. The world, the church, and the sinner's heart would all be darkness, the thickest darkness, were it not for his illumination. As the Spirit of God at first moved upon the face of the great deep, and brought order out of confusion, and light out of darkness; so in the moral system, he is the true light, that lighteneth every manthat cometh into the world. All spiritual life, as well as light, is from his sacred influence. It is he that quickens us when we are dead in trespasses and sins; that enlivens our graces afterwards; that warms our hearts with love, and fills us with the hope of eternal life. The vegetable world does not more need the reviving and refreshing beams of the sun, than the dull and torpid christian needs the Spirit's influence, to render him cheerful, active, and fruitful. Like the refiner's fire, the Holy Spirit purges the soul from sin, and separates the dross from the gold, consuming the one, and purifying the other, till it is presented as a vessel meet for the master's use. Like the element to which his influences are compared, it is the office of the Holy Spirit to assimilate us into his own likeness, to render us more and more like God and the Saviour, for whose blessed presence we are gradually prepared. Wholly are we dependent on this sacred influence for every spiritual blessing we possess, for all our strength to persevere, and for the ultimate enjoyment of that kingdom and glory which God hath provided for them that love him.

2. It is implied that this sacred fire may be quenched; for where there is no danger, there needs no caution. The Holy Spirit is indeed in his own nature unchangeable, and his designs and purposes cannot be frustrated; *yet his sanctifying* operations may be impeded, and *he himself* may be grieved so as to depart from us. Such

slights and affronts may be offered as shall cause him to withdraw his common influences, and for a time to suspend his gracious communications; so that wicked men may become hardened and incorrigible, and good men useless and uncomfortable. Though he dwells in all the saints, and will not finally leave nor forsake them; yet the enjoyment of his presence may be greatly interrupted, and we may be left to cry out with David, Take not thy Holy Spirit from me! Gifts may decline, and graces languish; the bruised reed may seem to be broken, and the smoaking flax to be quenched. Real christians are in danger of being as if they had no faith, no love, no concern for the divine glory; and may be left to feel themselves as sinful as if they had never been cleansed, and as sorrowful as if they had never enjoyed any hope. Hence that message to the church of Sardis: "Be watchful, and strengthen the things, which remain, that are ready to die. Remember, therefore, how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent." The witnessing of the Holy Spirit may also be withheld, as a consequence of his suspended influence, so that those who stood on the pinnacle of assurance, may be cast down almost to the depths of despair. Thus it was with Job, David, Heman, and many others; who cried out, "Will the Lord cast off for ever; and will he be favourable no more? Is his mercy clean gone for ever; doth his promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?" If the believer's state be settled and secure, his experience and his comforts are not so. Nor does the Holy Spirit, in these instances, ordinarily act in a way of mere sovereignty; but resentment on his part is the effect of provocation on ours. Your iniquities, says the prophet, have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you. They rebelled, and vexed his Holy Spirit; therefore he was turned to be their enemy, and he fought against them.—*Isa. lxiii. 10.*

3. The Holy Spirit may be quenched, in reference to others, as well as ourselves. His gifts and graces in his ministers may be damped by neglect, and by a contempt of their ministrations. Non-attendance on the word, unprofitable hearing, empty seats, a drowsy audience, reviling speeches, and false representations, are great discouragements to ministers; and hinder both their improvement and their usefulness. Under such circumstances they labour in vain, and spend their strength for nought. The word preached will not profit, unless it be mixed with faith in them that hear it. A prayerless people, and an unsuccessful ministry, generally go together. All these things have a tendency to extinguish that sacred fire which the Holy Spirit kindles in the breasts of his servants, and to make them drag on heavily in the work of the Lord. The want of mutual affection among christians, the neglect of social prayer and religious conversation, produce a similar effect on one another. In this respect christians are like coals of fire, which, when separated, will soon go out; but when kept together, will kindle into a blaze. Dissentions and disputes have a most unhappy influence on the state of religious ociety, and never fail to damp the holy zeal and ardour by which it ought to be animated. The heat of passion extinguishes the fire of love; and it is not likely that the Spirit of God should dwell with those who cannot dwell together in unity, but who are perpetually disagreeing among themselves. Hence the apostle gives the following important exhortation, an exhortation which demands the serious attention of all those who feel the necessity of cherishing those sacred influences by which alone our salvation can be finally secured. Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all *malice*; and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, *forgiving* one another, even as God for Christ's sake *hath forgiven* you.—Ephes. iv. 30—32.

Having offered these general remarks, let us notice more especially—

I. Some of the instances in which we are in danger of quenching the Holy Spirit.

1. By slighting and neglecting, much more by resisting, his operations on our minds. When the Holy Spirit stirs us up, and we do not stir up ourselves, nor the gift that is in us; when he suggests tender thoughts to our minds, and instead of cherishing, we reject them; when he works in us a conviction, either of sin or duty, and we stifle it; when we do not improve the gifts which he bestows, or exercise the grace which he implants; when we think ourselves equal to the work which we have to perform, and therefore do not seek his assistance, but lean to our own understanding, and depend on our own sufficiency; when we pray, but not in the Spirit; when we walk, but not in the Spirit; when we shake off restraints, and will have none of his counsel—we may truly be said to quench the Spirit, and to rebel against the Most High. When we neglect the means which he has prescribed for our spiritual improvement, and to which he has vouchsafed a blessing, such as meditation and prayer, reading and hearing the word, which are like fuel to the fire, it is no wonder that his influences are withdrawn; and when this is the case, the flame of love, like the fire upon the altar, is soon extinguished.

2. By diverting the mind from spiritual concerns, and engaging in vain and unnecessary recreations, we quench the Spirit, and damp the fire of devotion. Nothing is more contrary to his sacred influence, than a life of pleasure and dissipation. The children of Israel sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play; thus they corrupted themselves, and made a molten calf, and worshipped it. It is the character of all wicked men *that they are lovers* of pleasure, more than lovers of

God. They had rather be at a card table than in their closets, in a play-house than the house of prayer; and such are described as being sensual, not having the Spirit. Persons who seek to gratify their carnal appetites, and to indulge in sordid pleasures, are not likely to seek after spiritual enjoyments, or be favoured with heavenly influences. Walk in the Spirit, says the apostle, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh. Even innocent amusements, if too eagerly coveted, and too frequently pursued, become a snare to the soul; our attachments to religion are thereby weakened and undermined, and we lose our relish and our fitness for its solemn duties and engagements.

3. Inordinate affections towards any earthly object, however good or lawful in itself, tends to quench the ardour of devotion, and to lessen the influence of religion upon the heart. The life and power of godliness are seldom found among those who are eager in the pursuit of worldly gain. Those who make haste to be rich, do not rid much ground in the way to heaven. The Philistines stopped up the wells with earth, which had been dug by Abraham's servants; and in some a multitude of worldly business choaks the good seed of the word, so that it cannot spring up; while in others its growth is obstructed, and it is rendered unfruitful. The young ruler who came to our Lord for instruction, appeared to have some good inclinations and desires; but they were quenched and stifled by the love of the world, and he went away sorrowful, because he had great possessions.—Matt. xix. 16—22.

4. The Holy Spirit is quenched when we rob him of his glory, by denyng his divinity, or questioning the necessity and efficacy of his operations, and so taking that praise to ourselves which is due to his holy name. Every good thought, every holy desire, every duty *rightly* performed, is from him alone. There is a diversity of gifts, says the apostle, but the same Spirit; and *nothing* can be more offensive in his sight, than v

·ogate any thing to ourselves, as if we had not re-
ived it from him. If we are puffed up with know-
lge, elated with our gifts, and filled with a high
inion of our own sanctity and holiness, we dishonour
Holy Spirit, and are guilty of the pride charged on
araoh, king of Egypt, who said in his heart, "My
er is mine own, and I have made it for myself." To
ume to ourselves the honour of what God does, is as
ominable in his sight, as to do what he condemns;
l where his sacred influences are undervalued or
ied, by any self-sufficiency of our own, there is an
l to all reasonable hope in their bestowment. No-
ng pleases or glorifies him more, than to expect all
m him, and to ascribe all to him. "Shall the axe
ast itself against him that heweth therewith? Shall
saw magnify itself against him that shaketh it? As
he rod should shake itself against them that lift it up,
as if the staff should lift up itself, as if it were no
od."—Isa. x. 15.

5. All sin is a means of quenching the Spirit; secret
s, open sins, sins of omission, and of commission.
is, of all things, the most opposite to his holy nature,
d the most offensive in his sight. One sin, though
nparatively a little one, will damp his sacred fire;
t an obstinate, persevering course of iniquity will
erly extinguish it. All sin has this tendency, though
suffered to issue in such consequences. Sins of
akness and infirmity, sins resisted and lamented, he
ciously forgives, and knows how to compassionate;
he knoweth our frame, and remembereth that we
dust. All moral pollution must needs be displeas-
to Him, whose essence is purity itself. Every vain
ught, idle word, and criminal action, are like so
ny drops to quench the heavenly fire; but there are
er evils which come in like a flood, spreading still
ler devastation. Sins against light and knowledge,
ful *premeditated* sins, committed against remon-
nce and inward remorse, are productive of ruinous

consequences, and in danger of leaving us the victi of judicial blindness and hardness of heart. Presum tuous sins often repeated, are attended with a degr of carnal security, from which the sinner is rare awakened till he lifts up his eyes, being in tormen The sin of drunkenness and uncleanness is particular mentioned in scripture as opposite to the Holy Spir defiling the temple which he deigns to occupy, and d stroying his work. A wilful rejection of the gospel, treading under foot the blood of the Son of God, a counting it an unholy thing, is said to be doing despi unto the Spirit of grace; and under this load of aggr vated guilt, the sinner is left without any hope of merc and consigned to eternal punishment. 1 Cor. vi. 18, 1 Ephes. v. 18. Heb. x. 26—29.

II. Consider some of the reasons which should wa us of the sin and danger of quenching the Holy Spirit

Shall we reject his admonitions because he distur us in our evil courses, follows us with keen convictio and from a gracious regard for our welfare, will n suffer us to live at our ease? Because the fire bur within us, to warn us of eternal fire, shall we attem to extinguish it? And ought not believers to bewar lest through carelessness and inattention they grie their blessed Sanctifier and Comforter? Ought th not gratefully to remember with what sovereign effica he quickened them when they were dead in trespass and sins; how he has begun and carried on the goo work till this day; and in how many times of need, hi gracious assistance has been imparted? Shall we grie our best friend, and oppose our kindest benefactor Shall we return slights for benefits, and hatred f love? Is it not contrary to our duty, our interest *all the* obligations of gratitude, to oppose his wo *neglect* his kindness, and to treat him as an unwel *visitor?*

l. If we grieve and quench the Spirit, he will be ent to us; he will cease to admonish, and to guide When ministers speak to our ears, he will no ger speak to our hearts. We may hear the voice of d roaring out of Zion, or thundering from Mount ai; the voice of his threatenings, and the voice of rod; but we shall no longer hear the small still ce, speaking peace and comfort to our souls. When d is departed from us, he will answer us no more, ther by prophets, nor by dreams; but our wretched- s will be like that of Saul, king of Israel.—1 Sam. viii. 15.

2. If we quench the Spirit, even though believers in rist, he will suspend his influence for a time at least, l leave us to mourn in darkness. He will show his entment by withdrawing his presence from us; and n ordinances will be unprofitable, and duties become urden. We shall neither take pleasure in them, r derive advantage from them. When the Spirit no ger moves upon the waters of the sanctuary, they e their salutary influence, and neither health nor aling can be found in them. Corruptions will re- ve, an abatement in our abhorrence of sin will be rceived, and of course there will neither be watch- ness against it, nor strength to overcome. Weight ll be added to every affliction, and distress to every amity, till death and judgment become the objects of rful expectation, and of sore dismay.

3. By quenching the Spirit, we shall sin greatly ainst God, as well as against our own souls. The vine Father, who sends the Comforter, will be offend- . The Son of God, who procured this inestimable essing by his death, and made intercession for its stowment, will be offended, and will cause us to feel weight of divine displeasure. If we are the chil- en of God, and have done this evil in his sight, we ll be made to feel it in present rebukes and chastise- nts; if aliens and enemies in our hearts, we shall

meet with the punishment of eternal fire. Wh
children of Israel rebelled against God, and ve
Holy Spirit, he became their adversary, and
against them; and when the conflict is betwe
Creator and the creature, we may easily guess wh
be the issue. Woe be to us, if he depart from
A more dreadful woe, if he contend with us!

Come, blessed Spirit, source of light,
  Whose power and grace are unconfin'd,
Dispel the gloomy shades of night,
  Remove the darkness of the mind.

To mine illuminated eyes display
  The glorious truths thy word reveals;
Chase prejudices far away,
  Unclasp the book, and loose the seals.

By inward teachings make me know
  The mysteries of redeeming love;
The vanity of things below,
  The excellence of things above.

All through the dubious maze of life,
  Spread, like the sun, thy beams abroad;
Point out the dangers of the way,
  And guide my wandering feet to God.

SERMON IX.

1 Thess. v. 20.

Despise not prophesyings.

Prophesying, according to the ordinary acceptation of the term, signifies the foretelling of future events. The prophets of old were called Seers, because they foresaw things to come, and predicted them to others. Here the term is to be understood with greater latitude, as denoting the expounding of the scriptures, or giving public instruction in the church of God. And because some who do not despise the work and office itself, may nevertheless be disposed to cast contempt on the labours of particular ministers, the apostle forbids a contempt of "prophesyings" in general; lest by particular instances of allowed neglect, the office itself should be brought into disrepute.

Ministers have their peculiar gifts; one of improving the understanding, another of convicting the conscience, and a third of moving the passions. One is a son of thunder, and another of consolation; one opens the wound, and another applies the healing balm. One is learned, another eloquent; one is highly argumentative, another gently persuasive; but there is no faithful minister of the gospel, from whom we may not reap some advantage, let his peculiar gifts be what they will. Those who hear with prejudice, are never likely to hear with profit, let the preacher be who he may.

Moreover the apostle does not merely forbid us to despise prophets, but prophesyings; intimating that an

undervaluing of the one will lead to a contempt of the other, and while the former is not expressed it is implied. We are neither to despise the work nor the workman, the message, nor the messenger. For our own sakes we are to receive the message; and for his sake who sent him, we are charged to receive the messenger. Lydia affords us a good example; for her heart was open to the one, and her house to the other. This may teach us to set a value upon the instructor, but more upon the instruction given, as occupying a still more important place.

I. Let us endeavour more particularly to explain the caution given us in the text: "Despise not prophesyings."

Ministers themselves are required to magnify their office, and to discharge its important duties, so as to preserve it from contempt. Every effort of this kind is to be attended with great humility and lowliness of mind, remembering that it is not themselves, but their office, which they should be desirous to recommend and to exalt. It may be proper to covet earnestly the best gifts; yet an ability to preach the gospel in an intelligible and profitable manner, is to be preferred to the most splendid endowments, and even to the power of working miracles, though these also have had their use in the church of God. Hence that exhortation "Covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues." 1 Cor. xiv. 39.

The exhortation however applies more immediately to hearers of the word, who are required to reverence and esteem the messages which God sends them by his servants. Whatever be our attainments in knowledge or in grace, we are not to reject the means of improvement, for there is still room for farther advances in both. We have not yet attained, neither are we already perfect; but forgetting the things that are behind, we must still be pressing towards the mark. It become

) guard against a sickly stomach, which rejects the : wholesome food, and is like the full soul which ıeth the honey-comb.

Those who despise prophesyings are such as, from ference or contempt, refuse attendance upon a ched gospel. Some indeed are so openly profane make the sabbath a day of worldly business, amuse-:, or fleshly indulgence. There is also a description ıin and indolent professors, who being surfeited by ospel, imagine themselves wiser than their teachers, ɔretend that they can profit more by meditation and er at home, than by an attendance on public insti-ns. There were some in former times who forsook ssembling of themselves together, as the manner me now is; though in them it might arise from the ɔf suffering, while amongst us it is the effect of ful indifference, the love of carnal ease, ignorance conceit, and enmity against the truth. Proceed what cause it may, the souls of such are left to ;h for want of food, and are accessary to their own uction. If such persons pretend to spend a consi-ɔle part of that time in private devotion, which t to be employed in public worship, and in hearing ·ospel, let them remember that "he who turneth his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall ı abomination." If preaching be a divine appoint-, hearing must be implied. Woe is me, says Paul, ıreach not the gospel! And woe to the man who es to hear it! Prov. xxviii. 9. 1 Cor. ix. 16.

Those who attend the gospel, and yet with im-er dispositions, still come under the charge in our Some who frequent the house of God, are so ·om attending on his worship in a becoming man-that part of their time at least, is spent in drowsi-or trifling inattention, in reading the bible when should give ear to public instruction, or in ob-ng the different appearances of their fellow wor-ɔers, when their eyes should be fixed on the

preacher, or devoutly lifted up to heaven. Hence whe they come home they can tell more of what passed i the seats, than of what was delivered from the pulpit and to whomsoever it was a profitable opportunity, t them it was a lost one. Out of custom they go to se and be seen, and verily they have their reward!

Other hearers are not contented with plain truth frequently inculcated; they want something more nov and entertaining. Wholesome food will not satisfy unless the dish be garnished to their taste. What co the minister much pains and study, and many prayer and tears, shall be utterly rejected, because it is no embellished with the arts of oratory, or delivered wit greater ease and fluency. The apostle represents such sort of hearers of the word as having "itching ears;" and though, as he well expresses it, they "heap t themselves teachers," running from one place of wor ship to another, yet they are generally disappointed and get but little good to their souls.

3. Those who are apparently serious in their attend ance on the word preached, but who neither receive i in love, mix it with faith, nor reduce it to practice, ma be said to despise prophesyings. They do not dige what they hear, or turn it unto nourishment. They d not show their contempt, like some others, by neglec ing to hear the gospel, for they are forward to atte all opportunities; but by forgetting what they hear; that as soon as they have lost the sound, they lose bo sense and savour. This in many instances is not owin to natural infirmity, but wilful neglect, and minglin immediately with the cares and vanities of life.

The subsequent conduct of others, is an evidenc that they do not properly regard the caution given i the words before us. They are hearers, but not doer of the word, deceiving their ownselves. They can commend the sermon, and applaud the preacher; but are as light and vain in their temper, as unguarded and unfruitful in their conversation as they were before. No

one bosom sin is mortified, not one evil way forsaken, not one neglected duty performed. "They come unto thee as the people come, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them; for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness. And lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument; for they hear thy words, but they do them not." Ezek. xxxiii. 31, 32. The gospel is also in effect despised when it is attended to for unworthy purposes; to hide some iniquity, to silence conscience, to raise our reputation, or promote our worldly interest. Nor is it less so when those who attend the gospel give occasion for reproach, and bring it into disgrace by their unworthy conduct. Such are those of whom the apostle speaks, who bring upon themselves swift destruction, and by reason of whom the way of truth is evil spoken of. 2 Pet. ii. 1, 2.

II. Consider some of the reasons why the word of God is thus despised.

1. It may be owing in some instances to the weakness or the wickedness of those who dispense it. Jeroboam, who returned not from his evil way, brought the priesthood into contempt by making of the lowest of the people, priests of the high places; whosoever would, he consecrated him, and he became one of the priests of the high places. Ignorance and irreligion are but poor qualifications for the sacred office; and yet alas, some of this description have but too often intruded themselves into it, and have been willing to become levites for a morsel of bread. And where piety is not wanting, some preachers are found to be so deficient in natural ability, that they would have appeared much more respectable in any other station than that which they have presumed to occupy. It is not every one who possesses the faculty of thinking, or of expres-

sing their thoughts, in a manner adapted to gen edification; and to whom these advantages are den to them also the work of the ministry is denied. bishop in the christian church must be "apt to teac and if he be not, he has no authority to becon bishop. There are others also, whose conduct refl disgrace upon their office, like that of the sons of who made the offering of the Lord to be abhorred. offering itself was indeed the same, whoever were priests; and so is the gospel, whoever be the preacl but it is no uncommon thing for persons to tran their contempt from one to the other; and from ha an ill opinion of the latter, to think meanly of former. Hence the exhortation of Paul to Timot "Let no man despise thee."

2. When the preaching of the word is become c mon and familiar to us, it is in danger of being despi In those days when the word of the Lord was sca it was precious; but when line was upon line, and cept upon precept, here a little and there a littl became a reproach. Jer. vi. 10. When the childre Israel first saw the manna, they admired it, as its name signifies; but when it fell every morning rc their tents, they loathed it, calling it light br Scarcity creates a longing; but plenty breeds conte When our teachers were driven into corners, they diligently sought after; but now that they can proc the gospel on the house-tops, it is far otherwise. beware: "despise not prophesyings."

3. Contempt of the gospel may more properl ascribed to insensibility and unbelief; it is hardne heart that leads to a rejection of God's holy word commandment. Sinners are at ease in their sins, love to be so; if possible, they will not be alarme their danger. They are asleep, and do not wish t wakened. Those who under Peter's sermon w pricked to the heart, gladly received the word. It as welcome as food to the hungry, as a refreshing

to the fainting, or a pardon to the condemned factor. But the unbelieving sinner, who is an ıy to conviction, and the self-righteous professor, does not feel his need of conversion, will have but ht esteem for the words of eternal life. When the el feast was prepared, and an invitation sent unto eople, multitudes made light of it; some going to farms, and others to their merchandise. Those are indifferent about the salvation of their souls, always be indifferent about the gospel; and here we find another cause of their contempt.

In some instances it arises from a spirit of pro- ıess, and of desperate wickedness. I hate him, Ahab of Micaiah; for he never prophesieth good erning me, but evil. The word is contrary to them, they are contrary to the word. It reproves them, they cannot bear it; it condemns them, and they ır it. Knowledge aggravates sin, increases guilt, raises a tempest in the soul; therefore they do what can to preclude and shut it out. Stephen's hear- vere resolved not to be convinced, they therefore l out with a loud voice, in order to drown his words, then stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one rd, and cast him out of the city, and stoned him. at they would not practise, they did not desire ıow. Thus it is with many who are determined ıeir evil courses, and resolved to do whatsoever h out of their own mouth, and who therefore will hear what proceedeth out of the mouth of God. r are posting to destruction, and nothing shall stop ı in the way.

I. The sin and danger of such conduct.

ıe wise man has remarked, that none but "fools ıise wisdom and instruction;" and to despise that om which cometh from above, and that instruction h God giveth, is an instance of still greater pre-

sumption. It is also threatened with the most awfu punishment: "They refused to hear my words, there fore thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will bring evil upo them which they shall not be able to escape; and though they shall cry unto me, I will not hearken unto them." Prov. i. 7. Jer. xi. 10, 11.

1. Those who despise prophesyings, despise what God has honoured and will continue to honour. Not only angels, but the God of angels vouchsafes his presence in the assemblies of the saints; the former to learn, the latter to guide and direct, to own and bless. In all places where I record my name, saith the Lord, I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee. The conversion of sinners, the recovery of backsliders, and th edification of believers, are all instances in which h gives testimony to the word of his grace. Thus als is that promise fulfilled: As the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth, an bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread t the eater; so shall my word be that goeth forth out c my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but i shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall pros per in the thing whereto I sent it. Isa. lv. 10, 11.

2. Those who despise prophesyings, are guilty o despising divine authority. God's word is his roya law, and demands the most solemn regard. Hear, o Israel, says he, and I will speak. The gospel is calle the wisdom of God in a mystery; yea, it is both th wisdom of God, and the power of God. It is a revela tion of his grace and mercy, the overflowing of hi blessedness to a guilty world. Its being dispensed t us by men of like passions with ourselves, who ar subject to the same infirmities, and need the sam salvation, is an instance of divine compassion an condescension; in which God consults the weaknes of our frame, remembering that we are dust. H

therefore that despiseth his ministers, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto them his Holy Spirit. 1 Thess. iv. 8.

3. Despising the word is injurious to our own souls, as well as dishonouring to God. Prophesying or preaching is particularly designed for our benefit; for it pleaseth God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. It is the word of reconciliation sent to a rebellious world, commanding all men every where to repent, and beseeching them to be reconciled to God. To despise or neglect this message, is to neglect our best interests, both in this world, and that which is to come. If the gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; and a lost world is as nothing in comparison of a lost soul. Blessed is the man that heareth me, says wisdom, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors; for whoso findeth me, findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord; but he that sinneth against me, wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me, love death. Prov. viii. 34—36.

4. Those who despise the word, shall themselves be despised, and the contempt they have shown to it will at length fall upon their own heads. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh, the Lord shall have them in derision; he shall speak to them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure. Ministers who warned, admonished, and instructed them, shall one day despise them, even as they are now despised of them. Their fellow sinners who once applauded, shall hereafter reproach them; and God himself shall return their contempt. As a dream when one awaketh, so, oh Lord, when thou awakest thou shalt despise their image. In despising and rejecting the gospel, they have judged themselves unworthy of eternal life, and they shall never possess it. The Lord will laugh at their calamity, and mock when their fear cometh. They would not come to him for a blessing, and they shall depart from him with a curse. Consider this, all ye that forget God,

lest he tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver. See that ye refuse not him that speaketh; for if they escaped not, who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven. Psal. l. 22. Heb. xii. 25.

Instead of daring to despise, it becomes us to esteem and prize the word of God above every thing; and to part with every thing, rather than part with that, to buy the truth and sell it not. In order to this, it becomes us to seek a spiritual and heavenly frame, that we may discern the beauty, and taste the sweetness of the word; and if we truly love it, we shall meditate therein both day and night. The word preached will be peculiarly delightful, and we shall find it attended with a special blessing. The Lord himself loveth the gates of Zion, more than all the dwellings of Jacob; and if our hearts be there also, he will meet with us and he will bless us. Yea, blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple. Psal. lxv. 4.

O, may the gospel swiftly spread,
Revive the living, raise the dead;
A glorious work be carried on,
And millions tell what God hath done!

Let those who never felt before,
Experience his renewing power;
And saints once feasted with his love,
Receive fresh visits from above.

Arise, thou Sun of righteousness,
With light and life the nations bless;
In Zion, object now of scorn,
Be many sons and daughters born!

SERMON X.

1 Thessalonians v. 21.

Prove all things.

Some things are to be proved by reason and argument: I speak as unto wise men, says the apostle, judge ye what I say. Others are to be proved by rule, especially by the infallible rule of God's word. To the law and to the testimony, says the prophet: if they speak not according to this word, it is because they have no light in them. Some things are to be proved by experience: I have bought five yoke of oxen, says the man who wished to be excused from attending the marriage supper, and I go to prove them. Thus we prove the sweetness of honey by the taste, and the bitterness of affliction by experience. And when we are commanded to "prove all things," it may refer to such sort of experiments. Religious things are not to be taken upon trust; we are to consider, and to weigh them in a just and equal balance. Before we receive or embrace them, let them undergo a strict and impartial examination.

I. Let us notice what those things are, which we are required to bring to the test.

The exhortation comprehends "all things;" and amongst these, the following may more especially be intended—

1. Ourselves, or the state of our souls before God. The work of examination should certainly begin at home. Examine yourselves, says the apostle, whether ye be in the faith; prove your ownselves: know ye not

your ownselves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, ye be reprobates? It is needful to enquire, whetl be in a state of nature or of grace, in a state of frie or enmity with God. Our graces also need to be both as to their reality and degree; and wheth acquaintance and fellowship with God be such a rant the hope of eternal life. We profess to know but what effects does it produce on our hearts? observe the dealings of his providence, so as to ac ledge him in all our ways? Do we cleave to him ordinances; seek him in secret as well as in p and are we prepared to meet him, both in his and at his tribunal? Our faith and our practi hearts and our ways, require to be strictly exan to know whether they be truly upright before and conformable to his holy word. Let us sear try our ways, saith the prophet, and turn ag the Lord. Lam. iii. 40.

2. Others require to be proved, as well as our We are to try the spirits, whether they be of Unreasonable credulity is not less dangerous th belief. We ought especially to prove those wh choose as associates and friends; for confidence unfaithful man, particularly in times of trouble, a broken tooth, or a foot out of joint. Prov. xx Candidates for christian communion should be p before they are admitted into society; evidence be obtained of their possessing a competent acq ance with the way of salvation, and of their bei subjects of a work of grace upon the heart. Unle bring forth fruits meet for repentance, they will an honour, but a disgrace to religious society. said of the inferior officers of the christian church them first be proved: then let them use the offi deacon, being found blameless." But this is m pecially necessary with regard to ministers, wl required to be men of gifts, men of grace, of probity and industry, of extensive knowledg

experience in divine things; sound in the faith, and of holy conversation. The exhortation before us, following the caution not to despise propesyings, would seem to intimate that the apostle meant to say, 'Try your ministers before you engage their services, that you may not afterwards despise them.' This is important advice to those who enjoy the privilege of choosing their own teachers, and care should be taken neither to part with it nor abuse it.

3. Doctrines should be well examined and proved before we embrace them, and especially before we attempt to propagate them. As we have an undoubted right to judge for ourselves, it becomes us at all times to assert that right, and to exercise it in humble dependence on divine assistance. God has given us the power of thinking, and we should not suffer another to think for us. Why even of yourselves, said our Lord, judge ye not what is right. To prove all things is indeed a work of considerable difficulty, as the word itself implies; for it signifies such a diligent scrutiny as is productive of a clear discovery. Like those of old, we must sit down to examine the matter, with caution and deliberation, yet with a fixed desire of arriving at complete satisfaction. Bold and confident assertions should have no influence upon us, except to put us on our guard. The decrees of synods and of councils are to have no weight, any farther than they correspond with the scriptures of truth; for our faith must not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. All evangelical truth tends to abase the sinner, and to exalt the Saviour; to subdue the love and power of iniquity, and to establish in our hearts the love of God. True religion is practical in all its branches; and the doctrine that is heavenly in its origin, will be the same in its effects.

4. Our actions require to be proved, as well as the articles of our faith. Enquiry should be made whether we walk in the Spirit, or after the flesh; whether we

live in any known sin, or whether we have thought on our ways, and turned our feet to God's testimonies. Is it our concern to please him in all things, or are we careless to offend; are his precepts our delight, or do we treat them with indifference and neglect. These things will be the subject of solemn enquiry another day; for every man's work shall be tried of what sort it is, and therefore it demands our present examination. Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established. Turn not to the right hand, nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil. Let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. Not only our past but present conduct must be examined. Do we worship God in a spiritual manner? do we keep the ordinances as he delivered them to us? Do we endeavour to preserve a conscience void of offence, both towards God and towards man; giving to every one his due, and owing no man any thing but love, which is a debt that will still be owing, though ever discharging? Is there no bosom sin that we would gladly hide, as Rachel did her father's idols; no difficult or hazardous duty, from which we would be willingly excused? Do we not in some instances call good evil, and evil good; put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter? With respect to others, we can hardly be too charitable, or with respect to ourselves too suspicious; remembering that there is a way which seemeth right unto a man, though the end thereof are the ways of death. Prov. xiv. 12.

II. Consider the rules by which all things are to be tried.

To proceed properly in our enquiries, we must not judge of persons or things merely by outward appearances. This prepared the way for the fall: the woman saw that the tree was good for food, pleasant to the eye, and a tree to be desired to make one wise; and she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat. Persons

may make a fair shew in the flesh, when there are seven abominations in the heart. When Samuel the prophet looked on Eliah, the son of Jesse, and said, surely the Lord's anointed is before him; the Lord said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the heighth of his stature, because I have refused him; for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart. So principles and actions may have an appearance of truth and equity, and yet be quite contrary to the mind and will of God. Hence that command of our Saviour: Judge not according to the appearance; but judge righteous judgment. To do this we must neither submit to the opinions of men, nor be awed by their authority, however respectable it may seem, or whatever be the majority against us. The rules by which our judgment must be regulated, are something like the following—

1. We should prove both persons and doctrines by the fruits which they produce. When Christ speaks of false teachers, he says, By their fruits ye shall know them. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Wicked men will at length betray themselves, and so also will false doctrines. If they puff up the mind with vanity and conceit, with self-confidence and a contempt of others; if they lessen our fear of sin, and our love to holiness; if they harden the wicked in their evil practices, and discourage the righteous, by infusing a legal spirit, which prevents the exercise of humble confidence in God;—if principles become productive of these effects, and have a natural tendency to produce them, they are not of heavenly origin, and ought to be rejected.

2. Though the examples of wise and good men are not a certain rule, yet some attention is due to them. We are exhorted to be followers of those, who through faith and patience inherit the promises. In examining both our own principles and conduct, and those of

others, they may serve as a guide, and enable us to find our way through the wilderness with greater ease and safety. The advice given to the antient church of God, is still addressed to us: "If thou know not, oh thou fairest among women, go thy way by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents." In some cases it was sufficient for an apostle to say, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God; and the example of the primitive churches is especially worthy of regard. Above all it becomes us to keep close to the example which Christ himself has left us, as a pattern of absolute perfection. Learn of me, says he, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest to your souls.

3. We are to prove all things by the divine word; this is the universal test, both of principle and character. This is the balance in which God will weigh all mankind, and by this ought we to try ourselves as well as others. It is a plain, certain, and abiding rule, by which all controversies are to be decided, and all actions examined, that their rectitude or obliquity may be discovered. Search the scriptures, was the language of our Lord; to the law and to the testimony, was the language of his servant. Neither inward impressions, nor outward providences, are to be our rule, no, nor a voice from heaven; nothing but the written word.

4. Our own experience, corroborated by the word of truth, may in some cases be allowed to guide our judgment; and indeed there are some things which can only be known and judged of by experience. We cannot doubt of the truth of religion, when we have tasted its incomparable sweetness, and felt its irresistible power. He that believeth hath the witness in himself; a witness, both that he is sincere, and that God is true; a witness above all other witnesses, one that can neither be silenced nor confuted; the object of ridicule perhaps to others, but exceedingly establishing and confirming to the person who possesses it. Now

we believe, say the Samaritans to the woman who had been preaching Christ to them; not because of thy saying, but because we have heard him ourselves, and know that he is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world. John iv. 42.

And now let us be exhorted to set about this important work of examination; to continue it, if it be begun; to renew it, if it be laid aside. It requires great diligence and impartiality. This, oh believer, is one of those things which thine hand findeth to do: and thou must do it with all thy might. It also requires much wisdom, and that therefore must be sought. The rule is good, but understanding is necessary to apply it. Bless God for the Scriptures, and that thou hast them in thy mother tongue; without which, if thou art unlearned, they could be no rule to thee. Study them attentively, comparing spiritual things with spiritual; and pray for the teaching of the Holy Spirit. He alone can teach us to profit, and lead us in the way that we should go. Embrace no doctrine hastily; take not up with a profession lightly. Be slow in determining; but when determined, be stedfast and persevering. Prove all things: hold fast that which is good.

Does the old nature still remain,
  Or am I form'd anew?
What are my leading principles,
  The ends which I pursue?

Can I resign all earthly joys,
  For my Redeemer's sake?
Do I his lovely image bear,
  And of his grace partake?

Is there no reigning lust within,
  No idol in my heart?
No bosom or beloved sin,
  With which I'm loth to part?

Great God, without thine influence,
  Myself I cannot know;
Oh light thy candle in my soul,
  And search me through and through.

SERMON XI.

1 Thes. v. 21.

Hold fast that which is good.

To walk in the way of our fathers, merely because it was their way, has nothing commendable in it. On the contrary, to be wavering and unsettled, is uncomfortable and dangerous. While, therefore, we are exhorted to prove all things, we are to hold fast that which is good; not that which is established by human authority, or countenanced by public opinion, but that which in itself is good and recommended to us in the scriptures. This we are not only to esteem and embrace, but to hold fast; not like a sponge which receives all, both good and bad, nor like a sieve which retains the rubbish, and let the good pass away; but having our senses exercised to discern both good and evil, let us abhor the one, and cleave to the other with a holy obstinacy.

I. Explain the exhortation.

What are those good things which we are required to hold fast?

1. That which is principally intended, no doubt, is the gospel, the truth as it is in Jesus, the way of salvation by him. Buy the truth, and sell it not. The purchase is cheap, let us part with what we will in order to obtain it; and inestimable will be our loss, let us sell it for what we may. It cost us some pains to acquire it, and it is worth all our labour to retain it. Hold fast, therefore, the form of sound words, which thou hast

and received. It becomes us to arm ourselves
ı holy resolution, rather to part with our lives than
'render our belief of the gospel. It was said in
ıendation of the church at Philadelphia, Thou hast
my word, and hast not denied my name; and it
ıe to the honour of those who follow the example.
iii. 8.

That truth in particular which relates to the per-
ınd work of Christ, must be sacredly regarded.
the pearl of great price, the Father's gift to us,
fe, and strength, and joy of our souls. One of the
ıcts of faith in an awakened sinner, is to receive
t Jesus the Lord; the next is to hold him fast.
ıing this, we retain all that is worth having or
ng; our peace, our comfort, and the hope of
al life; every thing that is desirable, both in this
l and that which is to come. I found him whom
ıul loveth, said the church of old: I held him, and
d not let him go. The soul that has truly found
Saviour, will be unwilling to part with him; and
abour to retain him in the arms of faith and love,
ayers and by tears. Nor can we be too tenacious
ch a visitor, or of such a friend; his presence is
ing and refreshing, and there is no love like his.
. iii. 4.

The good treasure lodged in our hearts, or placed
r hands, must also be carefully preserved. The
ual weapons with which we are furnished, our
d and our helmet, especially our shield, must be
fast, so that the enemy may not be able to wrest
from us. The graces with which we are adorned,
ewels with which the Lord has decked us, the fine
, clean and white, with which he has clothed us,
be kept and guarded with holy care, that no man
our crown, or rob us of our inheritance. We must
ıold fast our integrity, as the guarantee of our piety,
the guardian of our safety; for without this, the
splendid professions are nothing. Primitive be-

lievers could say, Our rejoicing is this, the testimo of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerit not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, w have had our conversation in the world, and more abu dantly to you wards. Job also had this testimon from the mouth of God himself: Hast thou consider my servant Job, says he to Satan; a perfect and t upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evi And Job was concerned to hold fast his integrity: t I die, says he, will I not remove my integrity from m Many things are gone already, my substance, my ch dren, and my health: other things may go, but I w not let that go.—Job xxvii. 5.

4. We must hold fast our spiritual comforts, a whatever may contribute to the peace and purity our own minds. Whose house are we, says the apost if we hold fast the confidence, and the rejoicing of t hope firm unto the end. For this purpose a good co science must be carefully preserved, determining wi Job, that our heart shall not reproach us as long as t live. It is also good for us to remember the gracio promises that have been applied to us, the visits th the Lord has paid us, and the special tokens of l favour with which we have been indulged. David w sometimes supported under present troubles, by t recollection of past mercies and deliverances. Oh, t God! my soul is cast down within me: therefore wil remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of t Hermonites from the hill Mizar. Thus Goliah's swo and the rod of Moses were laid up before the Lord, the strengthening of Israel's faith in any future em gency. Thus also we may hold fast our former expe ence, remembering what God has done for us, and ple ing it with him for the bestowment of future mercy, a grace to help in every time of need.—Isa. li. 9, 10.

5. Care must be taken to preserve such a line conduct as is consistent with the word of God. *must hold* on to the end in a course of holy obedie

in praying, in reading and hearing the word, in acts of piety and devotion towards God, and in justice and benevolence towards men. The divine precepts have an uncontroulable authority, and should have on us an abiding influence. It was the dying advice of Joshua to the children of Israel, Cleave unto the Lord your God as ye have done unto this day; and the same advice is addressed to us. Satan makes but little opposition to an occasional religion, which operates only now and then, just sufficiently to quiet an evil conscience; for this promotes his interest, and favours that self-deception which ends in final ruin. By stedfastness in the christian course, by habitually cultivating holy and heavenly dispositions, and holding on our way, and holding fast the principles of truth and righteousness, the enemy is disappointed, and God abundantly glorified. He that endureth to the end shall be saved, and none else.—Mat. x. 22.

6. Not only are these things to be regarded, but likewise the open avowal of them; and if we have witnessed a good profession before many witnesses, we cannot go back from it without great dishonour. The unstable Hebrews are warned of this; and seeing we also have a great high Priest, who is able to plead our cause and bear us through, let us hold fast our confidence, and be faithful unto death. If Christ be not ashamed of us, surely we ought not to be ashamed of him; and if he will not deny us, we ought not to deny him. We should not only hold fast our faith, but the profession of it in times of persecution, when it may expose us to the severest sufferings. The divine command is, Thou shalt call me, my Father, and shalt not turn away from me. Such was the invincible stedfastness of Paul, that he could look martyrdom in the face, and say, If I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all.—Jer. iii. 19. Phil. ii. 17.

In explaining the exhortation, let us farther inquire,

how or in what manner we are to hold fast those goo things recommended to us in the gospel.

(1) It supposes that our judgment respecting thes things is settled and established; that we are not hal ing between two opinions, or like children carried t and fro with every wind of doctrine; but that we ar come to a decision on the great and leading truths the gospel, and resolved to abide by them. Thus was with Paul: None of these things move me, said he neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I migl finish my course with joy, and the ministry which have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gosp of the grace of God. Acts xx. 24.

(2) That we retain them in our memory. Peter fo got his Master, and then he forgot himself; but writing his last epistle, he guards against this forgetfu ness, and says, I will endeavour, that you may be ab after my decease, to have these things always in remer brance. The treachery of our memories, causes ma errors in our lives. Truth believed must also dwell our thoughts, in order to its becoming effectual to o salvation. By which also ye are saved, says the apostl if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unle ye have believed in vain. 1 Cor. xv. 2. 2 Pet. i. 15.

(3) It implies a high esteem for the truths of tl gospel, so as to give them the first place in our affe tions. When persons profess to embrace evangelic doctrines, and afterwards give them up, it is but t evident that with all their professions, "they receiv not the love of the truth, that they might be saved Nothing short of this, however, is true believing; a where the gospel is rightly embraced, the word is n only nigh us, and in our mouth, but also in our heart Of such it may truly be said, ye have obeyed from tl heart that form of doctrine which was delivered un you. Rom. vi. 17. x. 8, 9. 2 Thes. ii. 10.

(4) Holding fast the truth supposes that there *some* opposition to encounter, and that attempts w

be made to wrest it from us. When a great and effectual door is opened for its admission, there will generally be many adversaries. But as it was with the apostle, so it ought to be with every saint: difficulties excited greater diligence and zeal, and opposition roused his courage and resolution. In nothing, says he, am I terrified by your adversaries; which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God. Phil. i. 28.

II. Consider the motives by which the exhortation may be enforced.

1. The honour of God requires that we should hold fast what he has promised and revealed. Every degree of fickleness and inconstancy is a species of unbelief; and it is only by stedfastness and perseverance in the way of truth and holiness that we can glorify God. David's fall caused the enemies of God to blaspheme. The stedfastness of Peter and John excited admiration in their most inveterate persecutors; and not only admiration of them, but of their blessed Lord, for they took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus. What must men think of God's truth, if we renounce it; or of his ways, if we forsake them. Such conduct in the professed friends of Jesus, would be like that of the spies in the camp of Israel, who brought an evil report on the good land.

2. The things we are required to hold fast, are good in themselves; and if we are what we profess to be, we have found them such. The Lord hath showed thee, O man, what is good. It is good doctrine that we are to maintain, good discipline that we are to preserve in our families and in the house of God, and good works for necessary uses. All these are good in themselves, and good for us. Now will a man leave the snow of Lebanon, which cometh from the rock of the field; or shall the cold flowing waters that come from another place be forsaken? Jer. xviii. 14—17.

3. If we part with the good, we shall be likely t retain the evil. If the heart is not the treasury o good things, it will be of evil things. If good thought are shut out, evil thoughts will rush in. The absenc of gracious affections, makes room for vile affections If we let the truth go, we shall immediately embrac error; and if our hearts are not inclined to God' testimonies, they will be after their covetousnes When the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, a evil Spirit troubled him. Evil qualities will tak place, where good ones are wanting; and if grace b not prevalent, sin will be predominant.

4. If we part with that which is good, we cann easily recover it; and if the Lord do not utterly fo sake us when we forsake him, yet he will leave us so rowful and comfortless. We read of some who a scarcely saved, and saved, yet so as by fire; they a made to feel something of hell here, though they are enjoy heaven hereafter. Spiritual frames and feelin when lost, are not easily recovered. The Spouse old, when bereaved of her Beloved, was a long tin before she found him. Many of those who have le their first love, have had to complain of coldness an indifference afterwards, and have walked mournfull and in darkness all their days.

5. If we refuse submission to this exhortation, wh account shall we give another day? Shall we not stan speechless when the great Judge of all shall say, Giv an account of thy stewardship, for thou mayest be n longer steward. Will it be a sufficient excuse for o sloth and negligence, instability, and unfaithfulness, th our enemies enticed us, that corrupt nature inclined u that God left us, and that we were not sufficiently a prised of the worth and excellency of heavenly thing From him that hath not, or who doth not retain a improve what he hath, shall be taken away that whi he seemeth to have. He partly stripped himself, a God will entirely strip him. He abandoned that whi

od, and he shall be abandoned to ruin and destruc-
It would be better for such, says the apostle,
o have known the way of righteousness, than after
have known it, to turn from the holy commandment
ered unto them. Awful declaration! may it make
per impression upon our minds! 2 Pet. ii. 21.—
e we learn,

That nothing but true religion will stand its
nd. Consideration therefore should go before a
ssion; and ere we attempt to build the tower, we
d sit down and count the cost.

That perseverance in the way of truth and holi-
is necessary to eternal happiness. Now the just
live by faith; but if any man draw back, my soul
have no pleasure in him. Heb. x. 38.

Perseverance is the duty as well as the privilege
the saints, and therefore cautions and exhorta-
are not unnecessary. Our preservation is owing
divine power, but it is effected through the use of
inted means. The establishment of the saints is
where in scripture ascribed to the influence of
Holy Spirit; yet we are at the same time exhorted
ware, lest being led away by the error of the wicked,
ould fall from our own stedfastness. God holds
it; therein consists our safety. But we must hold
ast; therein consists our comfort. 2 Pet. iii. 17.

Oh, whither will these passions roll,
And where convey the yielding soul;
This treacherous heart, how apt to stray,
What skilful hand will guide my way?

Jesus, the work is thine—oh come,
And gently lead this straggler home;
To me my various wanderings show,
And teach me how and where to go.

Amidst surrounding snares secure,
Whilst mercy makes this blessing sure,
I'll own the conduct of thy grace,
And tread the paths of righteousness.

SERMON XII.

1 Thess. v. 22.

Abstain from all appearance of evil.

The gospel is a doctrine according to godlines The religion of Jesus is a pure and holy religion. Th grace of God may be abused, but it does not lead t licentiousness. Wherever it is revealed to the under standing, and rules in the heart, it teaches men th denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, they should liv soberly, righteously, and godly in the present world. I we search the writings of the best heathen moralist we shall not find in any of them so comprehensive precept as this: "Abstain from all appearance c evil."

Not only are we to avoid, but to keep at the greate distance from evil, and to reject it with the utmost ab horrence. We are to have no fellowship with th unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them We are to "abstain," to exercise self-denial and mo tification, respecting those evils to which our natur inclination might lead us. The "evil" here intende is not natural but moral, the evil of sin, to which n other evil is to be compared; it is evil in its origi nature, and effects; universally evil, without any mi ture of good, and unalterably so, without any abat ment. The nature of the sinner may be changed, b not the nature of sin.

The command is so extensive, that "all appearanc of evil is to be avoided; not only the grosser and less

is, those that are more open and those that are con-
aled, but whatever bears the resemblance, or the
ost distant likeness to moral evil. It is not enough
at we keep from sin; we must keep from the way
'danger. We must not only avoid condemnation, but
ispicion of evil. When we consider what an evil
orld we have around us, what incentives to evil,
hat examples are set before us, and what a world of
vil we have within us, no advice could be more
easonable than that suggested in the text. Consi-
ering also the difficulty of complying with such ad-
ice, we need not only the utmost caution and circum-
pection, but constant supplies of grace and strength,
nd habitual dependance on him who alone can fit us
r every good word and work. Conscious of innumer-
ble defects, after all our watchfulness and care, we
all have occasion still to exclaim with the psalmist,
ho can understand his errors; cleanse thou me from
ecret faults! I have seen an end of all perfection;
ut thy commandment is exceeding broad.

I. Endeavour more particularly to explain the ex-
ortation, by enquiring what are those appearances
f evil which we are required to avoid.

1. Whatever may be interpreted as evil by others,
o as to become a stumbling block or matter of re-
roach, should as far as possible be avoided. Their
onsciences may perhaps be too scrupulous, and their
empers censorious; yet we are not to offend or grieve
he weak unnecessarily. The omission of things indif-
erent, can neither be sinful or injurious; but our ven-
uring upon them, when they are known to give offence
o others, renders them not only inexpedient but sinful.
Meat offered to idols was in itself a thing indifferent;
hose who partook of it were none the better, neither
were they the worse for refraining, because an idol is
nothing in the world; yet if by partaking we wound

the conscience of the weak, the apostle shows that tl is sinning against Christ. For himself therefore l forms a resolution, which at once bespeaks his tende ness and faithfulness. "If meat make my brother offend," says he, "I will eat no flesh while the wor standeth, lest I make my brother to offend." Not on our own consciences, but those of others require th kind of delicate treatment. 1 Cor. viii. 13. As we mu not sin against the divine law, by doing that which really evil; so neither against the law of charity, l grieving others, or emboldening them to do that whi in them would be an offence, though not in us. I that can torment the weak or tender conscience of a other, with his food or his conduct, does not love l neighbour as himself, and is therefore a transgressor the law. Yet this must be understood with some lin tation, for there would be no end of conforming ou selves to the humours and fancies of those who lay great stress on rites and ceremonies, modes of spee and dress, and such sort of indifferent matters; a therefore in many cases, good men must be left act according to their own judgment, and may ve properly disregard the scruples of others, when eith they have no shadow of reason to support them, or a authority from the divine word. Thus our Lord heal diseases on the sabbath day, though it was thought be a great evil among the Jews. The apostles al being forbidden to speak any more in the name of Jesu boldly replied, Whether it be right in the sight of G to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge y Though therefore we are bound to take heed that put not a stumbling block in the way of a weak br ther; yet if such a brother be stumbled at any part our conduct which is not blameable in itself, but which he may have taken a wrong view, we are not a swerable for the consequences. We are called to wa by the testimony of God; not according to the measu of any man's conscience, how sincere soever he may b

2. What may be an occasion of evil to ourselves, must be carefully avoided. Some things, not sinful in themselves, may nevertheles lead to evil. Peter's going to the palace of the high priest, proved the unhappy occasion of his denying his Master. Achan's looking upon the golden wedge and the Babylonish garment, stirred up his covetousness, and tempted him to break an express command; and he perished for his rebellion. Hence it was David's prayer, that God would turn away his eyes from beholding vanity, lest his eyes should turn away his heart. Jesus also taught his disciples to pray, lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. But to offer up this prayer, and at the same time to go in the way of temptation, would be no better than solemn mockery: it is like running into the mouth of the enemy, and then crying to be delivered. It was the saying of a heathen philosopher, Let us retire from slippery places, since without that disadvantage, we often find it difficult to stand. The Nazarites were forbidden to drink wine or strong drink; and to render this prohibition more effectual, they abstained from eating grapes, whether moist or dry, and from partaking of whatever was the produce of the vine. The only way to avoid evil is to guard against first impressions, and all the avenues that lead to it. The fly that buzzes about the candle, will at length singe its wings, if no worse befal it. Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burnt? Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burnt? Frequenting places of amusement, mingling with carnal company, going unnecessarily to markets and fairs, or trifling with any temptation, as Eve did before she fell, and as Sampson did when he laid his head on the harlot's lap, is running counter to every precept given us in the scriptures. Abstain from all appearance of evil.

3. Whatever borders upon evil, or approaches towards it, must be scrupulously avoided. We are required to hate the garment spotted with the flesh,

not to approach the limits of the forbidden ground; and instead of enquiring how far we may go, in gratifying this or that appetite or desire, and not offend against God, it becomes us rather to beware of the distance we ought to preserve, in order to be out of the reach of danger. When the Lord appeared on Mount Sinai, he fenced it round about, that the people might not come near the borders of it; and if so much as a beast touched the mountain, he was to be thrust through with a dart. This sacred precaution may teach us the necessity of guarding against every tendency to violate the divine commands, and to beware every species of profaneness. There are persons who though they will not swear or directly take the name of the Lord in vain, will nevertheless make use of certain expletives in their ordinary conversation, which have at least the appearance of evil, if they do not directly involve a breach of the third commandment. Extravagance in dress, going beyond our circumstances, or occupying too much of our time and attention, in order to indulge a vain and worldly appetite, must be classed amongst those seeming evils which we are required to avoid. Loading our tables with superfluities, and consuming on our lusts what might be given to the poor, is an evil which falls under the same condemnation. It is thus that our table becomes a snare before us, and that which should have been for our welfare, becomes a trap. The spirit of true religion is opposite to all this: its language is, Having food and raiment, let us be therewith content; for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.

4. The prohibition extends to the first motions and risings of evil in the heart; such as anger, covetousness, uncleanness, and every other sinful propensity. If the cockatrice egg be not crushed, it will produce a serpent. When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. Conscience warns men in general against gross and notorious sins,

but the real christian is expected to go farther; he is to hate vain thoughts, and to repress every impure desire. What he dares not act, he should not contemplate with the least satisfaction; and if he would prevent the breaking out of corruption in his life and conversation, he must guard against its first workings in the heart. Whatever may be our resolutions to the contrary, if we roll sin under our tongue as a sweet morsel, we shall be in the greatest danger of swallowing it down, and so of drinking in iniquity like water. Hence the great Prophet of the church forbids the wanton look, and the wise king of Israel, the looking at the wine, when it giveth its colour in the cup, and moveth itself aright. All sin begins in the heart; and, if entertained there, it is more than probable that we shall fall into some gross iniquity, and make work for bitter repentance, notwithstanding all our supposed care and circumspection. Keep thine heart, therefore, with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life. Out of the heart proceedeth evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witnesses, blasphemies; and these are the things which defile a man. They that are Christ's, have crucified the flesh, with its affections and lusts; they not only abstain from outward evil, but make it their object to mortify their propensities to evil, that they may be holy in body, soul, and spirit.

5. We may be said to abstain from all appearance of evil, when our whole conduct will bear the light; when we are sincere in our intentions, and circumspect in our actions; when we call no sin little, and thereby excuse the commission of it; and no duty hard, and thereby are tempted to neglect it. When, in all we think, say, and do, we aim at the divine glory, and seek after a perfect conformity to the divine will, we may be said to be Israelites indeed, in whom there is no guile. Not only are we to abstain from the appearance of evil in general, but of every particular evil; and especially that to which we are most inclined, either from natural

temper, or our peculiar situation in life; for herein lie our principal danger. Such as pride, whether inwar or outward, in heart or life; passion, which is a kind o temporary insanity, and deprives us of the possessio of ourselves; covetousness, which degrades both th man and the christian; sloth and idleness, which ar the inlet to every other evil.

This habitual watchfulness and circumspection ar required, more particularly,

(1) In the common concerns of life; in our trad and commerce; and in all our transactions with man kind. We should be punctual and exact in all ou dealings; not only just, but making it appear that w are so; neither exacting of the ignorant, or imposing on the unwary. Let no man go beyond, and defrau his brother in any matter, says the apostle; becaus that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we als have forewarned you, and testified. Every thing lik artifice and fleshly wisdom, even in worldly matters is utterly unworthy of the christian character.—1 Thes. iv. 6.

(2) In our amusements and recreations, every ap pearance of evil must be avoided. These should b innocent and lawful; such as we may safely engage in without offending others, or wounding our own con sciences. They must be few and inexpensive; neithe engrossing too much time, nor trespassing on the dutie of life; contributing to health, without impairing th vigour of the mind. Time, place, associates, and othe circumstances must be select, and such as are not liabl to any reasonable objection.

(3) In our daily conversation and intercourse wit society. Our words should not only be words of truth but also of soberness; free from hypocrisy and guile flattery, and censoriousness. Let all bitterness, an wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, b put away from you, with all malice. Our whole con versation, as far as possible, should be spiritual an

heavenly; manifesting grace in us, and ministering grace to the hearers. Let your yea be yea, and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation. Be content with simple affirmations and negations; for whatsoever is more than this, cometh of evil. Let your words not only be true, but carry with them the evidence of truth. Ephes. iv. 29. James v. 12.

(4) In our religious exercises, the same holy circumspection must be observed. An apostle intimates, that even our good may be evil spoken of; and, it will be so, unless we take care that those duties, which ought to be secret, are really so. Care especially should be taken, that family duties be neither ill-timed, or unduly prolonged, so as to render them burdensome to those for whose benefit they are principally intended. In public worship, also, every thing requires to be so conducted, as to excite reverence and devotion, and to make the house of God a place of delightful resort. Distorted features, affected appearances of uncommon devotion, and noisy declamation, instead of recommending religion, will only expose it to contempt, and bring upon ourselves the charge of hypocrisy, whether we deserve it or not. Let all things be done decently, and to godly edifying. Abstain from all appearance of evil.

II. Let us proceed to consider the motives by which this duty is recommended.

1. By abstaining from the appearance of evil, many of our falls would be prevented. The beginnings of sin, as well as the beginnings of strife, are like the letting forth of water; we see the commencement, but cannot tell what will be the issue. But he that despiseth small things, shall fall by little and little. What did David suffer, by walking upon the housetop; and Peter, by associating with the servants of the high priest? We know the beginnings of sin; but

God only can set bounds to it; saying to a raging lust, as he did to the raging sea, Hitherto thou hast gone, but thou shalt go no farther. Seeming evils make way for real ones; as, in cleaving of wood, the lesser wedge makes way for the greater. He who sups up the broth will, by and bye, taste of the meat.—An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

2. It will give credit to our profession, and tend to convince the world of the reality of our religion. Watchfulness against sin is the best proof of our sincerity. To keep near to God, and to be diligent in holy duties, is the only way to keep the tempter at a distance, and to be preserved from his assaults. Our enemies, who lie in wait for our halting, will hereby be disappointed, and our best friend will be honoured. To be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, is the way to shine as lights in the world, and to conduct others in the way to heaven. Phil. ii. 15.

3. It will contribute much to the peace and satisfaction of our minds. As many as walk according to this rule, says the apostle, peace be on them, and mercy, and on the Israel of God. One sin overcome and stifled in the birth, brings more comfort to the soul, and more glory to God, than many sins repented of, after they have been committed. Conduct, full of circumspection, will not only convince others, but ourselves also, that we are the people of God. Watchfulness against sin is necessary to our enjoying an assurance of the divine favour; and assurance, without this, is an awful presumption. It is only by the spirit of holiness that we can bear up under the afflictions of the present life; can look death in the face without fear; can pass through the world with ease and honour; and leave it without regret. Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace, even though his life may have been full of trouble. Psal. xxxvii. 37.

4. Whatsoever is contrary to the spirit of this precept, will be found to be highly prejudicial both to ourselves and others. Guilt and darkness will be the inevitable consequence. David's heart smote him for cutting off Saul's skirt, which, indeed, was only an appearance of evil; and if our conscience be kept tender, we shall suffer for every slight offence. Breaking the least of Christ's commandments will prove injurious both to reputation and usefulness. Dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savour; so doth a little folly, him that is in reputation for wisdom and honour. The indulgence of sin, in any degree, will stifle convictions, silence the admonitions of conscience, and gradually introduce stupidity and hardness of heart. In good men, it will destroy the relish for holy duties, and cause a distance between God and the soul. The effect will be to increase the prejudices of the wicked, to cast a stumbling block before inquirers, and open the mouths of blasphemers. 2 Pet. ii. 2.

Sin is so of such an odious nature, that the very shadow of it is to be avoided. Whatever leads to it, or looks like it, is hateful in the sight of God, and should be so to us. If it be not so, it is because we are not sufficiently apprised of its exceeding sinfulness, and need an enlightened understanding, properly to distinguish between good and evil. Our great care must be to keep our consciences tender, easily susceptible of divine impressions; to be ever on the watch, and ready to give warning at the approach of danger.

To avoid doing evil, let us be much employed in doing good. Walk in the spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh. The performance of duty prevents the commission of crime, and even the temptation to it, as the exercise of grace prevents the efforts of corruption. He that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips, that

they speak no guile; let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it. Finally, whatsoever things are true; whatsoever things are honest; whatsoever things are just; whatsoever things are pure; whatsoever things are lovely; whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things, and the God of peace shall be with you. Phil. iv. 8, 9. 2 Pet. ii. 2.

A conscience all serene,
Is a perpetual feast,
Of guilt disburdened, and no more
With slavish fears oppressed.

Now we may boldly come
To a forgiving God,
Resting on Jesus' righteousness,
And his atoning blood.

A thousand pleasing thoughts
Our raptured minds employ;
Nought can disturb our present rest,
Prevent our future joy.

SERMON XIII.

JOHN xviii. 37.

Every one that is of the truth, heareth my voice.

Two distinguishing characteristics of Christ's disciples are given us in these words: Those who are his, own him in this world, and shall be acknowledged by him in the next; they are the truth, and they hear his voice.

I. All real christians are of the truth.

Similar language is used by the beloved disciple, as by the Lord: My little children, says he, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth; and hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. 1 John iii. 18, 19.

1. Being "of the truth," may imply uprightness and integrity of character, as the word is frequently understood in scripture. Thus, in the following instances: "Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts—I have walked before thee in truth." And drawing nigh with a true heart, in the full assurance of faith, is the same as a heart free from hypocrisy and guile; one whose ends and aims are single, and whose governing principles will bear the closest examination. A heart thus renewed and sanctified by divine grace, is that by which every true believer is distinguished. There is an agreement between his inward feelings and outward professions. His faith is unfeigned, his love without

dissimulation; he is a true worshipper of God, and a real friend to mankind. He does not put on the appearance of religion, to promote his worldly interests, or to impose upon his fellow-creatures; but is, in truth, an upright and honest man. Sincerity, like a golden thread, runs through and adorns all his actions. Such as are of the truth, and who hope to assure their hearts before God, will be careful to maintain this character, and shun all disguise.

2. It implies a stedfast attachment to the doctrines and precepts of the gospel. The whole of divine revelation is called the truth: but the gospel is so called by way of eminence. Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth. It is called the grace of God in truth, the word of the truth of the gospel, the truth as it is in Jesus. And it is thus denominated, not only as bearing the impress of divine authority, and illustrating the divine perfections, in common with other parts of the sacred word; but more especially, because it contains the substance of all the mercy which had been promised to the church, and is itself the fulfilment of all the prophecies relating to the person and work of Christ. According as it is written: "Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old." Micah vii. 20.—Now, to be "of the truth," is to know it, to be conformed to it, to be stedfast in it. It is to embrace the gospel way of salvation, to walk in it, and continue to the end. Hence it is given as a description of primitive believers, that they "continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine." They examined, and then embraced it; and, having done so, they resolved to maintain and defend it against its most virulent opposers; to exemplify it in their lives; and, if called to it, to seal it with their blood. They were neither allured by flattery, nor terrified by danger; but preserved the most unshaken constancy amidst the greatest trials, and the fiercest opposition.—The

gospel might indeed be called the truth for another reason: there is no true doctrine but what is consonant with it; no true piety but what is founded upon it; and no true consolation but what is derived from it. It is the rule of our conduct, and opens to us the way of salvation. It is therefore the object of faith and love to all good men; and they are ready to say, with the apostle, We can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth. 2 Cor. xiii. 8.

3. This expression includes a steadfast attachment to Christ, a cleaving to him with full purpose of heart. He is truth itself, the essential truth of God. I am the way, says Jesus, the truth, and the life. He is the original of truth, and its brightest manifestation. All the perfections of God are revealed in him; all the counsels of God are made known by him. He is the compendium of all the glorious truths contained in the written word; in him they all meet as so many lines in their centre. To this end was I born, says he, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth, heareth my voice. He is the substance of all types and shadows, the foundation on which the saints build all their hopes, the overflowing spring from whence they derive all their comforts. The law was given by Moses; but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ; grace in its richest glory, and truth in its brightest emanations.—To be of the truth, is to be believers in Christ, to hope for eternal life through his name, and to have no confidence in any other. God has laid all our help upon him; and to him alone are we to look, as mighty to save. Those who are of the truth have received Christ Jesus the Lord, in all his offices and characters; as their exemplar upon earth, and their prevailing advocate in heaven. I know whom I have believed, was the language of Paul: I depend upon his mercy to pardon me, his grace to assist me, and his power to preserve me. I have trusted the important concerns of my soul

in his hands, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day. I rely upon him for the recovery of that peace which I have lost, of that image which I have defaced, and that happiness which I have forfeited. I renounce all dependence on my own righteousness, and place my whole confidence in him. He of God is made unto me wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. He is my present portion, and will be my eternal all. 1 Cor. i. 30. 2 Tim. i. 12.

4. Being of the truth, may denote an intimate relation to God, as the God of truth. The encomium which Moses gave of the God of Israel, is expressive of his true character. "He is the rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are judgment; a God of truth, and without iniquity, just and right is he.—The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth." David also celebrates his glory in similar language: "All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant, and his testimonies — The Lord, which made heaven and earth, keepeth truth for ever."—To be of the truth, therefore, is to be of God; and this is the character of all his people. They are begotten by the word of truth, and bear a resemblance to the Author of truth; he claims them as his property, and they can sometimes claim him as their portion. They rely on his veracity, and copy after it. It is said of God, that he cannot lie, and of his children that they will not lie; the truth is in them, and they walk in the truth. They love the gospel, and exemplify it by the purity of their lives. 3 John iii.

II. It is the character of the friends of truth, that they hear the Saviour's voice.

Many heard his voice, indeed, while he was on earth, *who derived* no real benefit from his instructions; they

neither trembled at his threatenings, nor complied with his gracious invitations. They gave him the hearing, as many do his ministers, and that was all; but his chosen people both hear and receive the truth in love. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. Whether he speaks to them in his word, or by his ministers, or whether in a way of providence, they hear and approve, believe and obey. Every mercy and every affliction has a voice which they understand, and they can distinguish the voice of the Shepherd from that of strangers. When he speaks to them powerfully by his Spirit in the word, he quickens their inactive powers, calms their anxious and disquieting fears, and fills them with joy and peace in believing. The friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. It is his voice which quickens those who are dead in trespasses and sins, directs the doubtful, and revives the drooping saint. The voice of others may reach the ears; but the voice of Christ reaches the heart.

1. Such as truly hear his voice, hear it with seriousness and attention. This is implied in the following exhortations: "Hearken, oh daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget, also, thine own people, and thy father's house.—Hearken diligently unto me; incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live." Thus, when God opened the heart of Lydia, she attended to the things that were spoken by Paul. She never heard such a sermon before, and never heard in such a manner before. When Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them, the people, with one accord, gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. He spoke seriously and in good earnest, and they heard with deep attention and good effect. So we preach, said an apostle, and so ye believed.

2. Those who hear Christ's voice, hear it with judg-

ment and understanding. He tells us that his sheep not only hear his voice, but they know it; they distinguish it from the voice of strangers, who would draw them from the truth, and from the good ways of God. The sanctified ear will be inquisitive, listening for good news from a far country: it will want to hear what it never heard before, and to have those things set in a clearer light, which were previously, but only partially understood. The hearing ear, and the understanding heart, though inquisitive, will not be credulous, will not take things on trust; but will prove all things, and hold fast that which is good. Even Christ himself, who spake as never man did, and confirmed his doctrine by the most astonishing miracles, not only admitted, but encouraged free inquiry. Why, even of yourselves, says he, judge ye not what is right? He spoke to the judgment, as well as the affections, that men might exercise their reason in distinguishing between truth and error, and so be led to discern the things that are excellent. Beloved, says John, believe not every spirit; but try the spirits whether they are of God, because many false prophets are gone out into the world. The simple believeth every word; but the prudent man looketh well to his goings. Prov. xiv. 1. 1 John iv. 1

3. Affection and delight are included in hearing the Shepherd's voice. Those who have heard with understanding, would be always hearing. They are ready to say, with the church of old, It is the voice of my beloved; full of majesty and full of sweetness, alarming, and yet alluring. If he speaks by terrible things, it is ever in a way of righteousness; but it is usually a voice of grace and peace, proclaiming deliverance to the captives, and pardon and salvation to sinful men. The glad tidings of the gospel bring present refreshment, and leave behind them a precious savour. Thy words were found, and I did eat them, and they were unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart. Similar to *this was* the language of the disciples, after they had

seen the Lord in their way to Emmaus: Did not our hearts burn within us, whilst he talked with us by the way, and opened unto us the scriptures? When the word is mixed with faith and love, as it is must be in order to our profiting, it will be productive of holy joy. When the Samaritans heard and embraced the gospel, it is said there was great joy in that city. Luke xxiv. 32; Acts viii. 8.

4. Those who rightly hear the Saviour's voice, regard it as addressed to themselves, and as applicable to their own case. They do not hear for others, saying, this is suitable for such a one, or that is adapted to the case of another; they hear for themselves, and feel that they are personally concerned in all that the Saviour speaks. With Samuel they say, Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth; and with David, When thou saidst seek ye my face, my heart replied, thy face, Lord, will I seek. So with the Jews in Jeremiah's time, when the Lord said to them, Return, ye backsliding children, they immediately answered, behold we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God. This is receiving the word, not as the word of man, but as it is indeed and in truth, the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. And thus it will always be received, when it is attended with a divine influence. For our gospel, says Paul, came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; and ye became followers of us, and of the Lord; having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost. 1 Thess. i. 5, 6.

5. Those who are of the truth will hear it with a humble resolution to believe and obey. Peter and Matthew heard the Saviour's voice, saying, Follow me; and they instantly obeyed. The one forsook his net, and the other his custom-house, and they followed Jesus. When he said to Zaccheus in the sycamore tree, Come down, for I must this day abide in thy house; Zaccheus came down, and received him joyfully. Here was no

reluctance or delay; the obedience was prompt and decisive. The voice of men and of ministers is weak and inoperative; but the voice of Christ is powerful and effectual. He speaks, and it is done; he commands, and it stands fast for ever. The voice of the Lord is full of majesty; the voice of the Lord shaketh the wilderness, and breaketh the cedars of Lebanon. It calls dead sinners from their graves of ignorance and sin; it melts and subdues the heart, and forms the man afresh. Under its influence, new principles, new actions are produced; and it alone becomes the law in the new creation. Those who hear this voice, will turn a deaf ear to the voice of a stranger. If the enemy tempts, the answer will be, Get thee behind me, Satan. If persecutors threaten, their answer is, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. If wicked men entice, they reply, Depart from us, ye evil doers, for we will keep the commandments of the Lord. If the world present its allurements, they will pray, with hearts and hands lifted up to heaven, Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity. The ear that is open to Christ, is stopped to every one that would speak against him, or oppose his authority.

To conclude: if we would hear the Saviour's voice, we must go where his gospel is proclaimed. The queen of Sheba travelled nearly a thousand miles, to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and surely a little inconvenience should not hinder us from hearing, when a greater than Solomon is here. Rather, let us say with Peter, To whom, Lord, should we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And if we have indeed heard his voice, and believed on his name, let him hear our voice, in confession and thanksgiving, in prayer and in praise; and also in our commendations of him to all around us. This he himself desires, and thus bespeaks the attention of his church. Oh, my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let me

thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet thy voice, and thy countenance is comely. Cant. 14.

Is this my Saviour's voice?
With reverence profound,
And humble joy, will I attend
The sweet and solemn sound.

As music charms the ear,
So this th' afflicted mind;
Here, when oppress'd with anxious care,
I solid comfort find.

Hence I obtain relief
From complicated woes;
And, in a world of sin and grief,
Enjoy a sweet repose.

'Tis an inviting voice,
And calls to joys on high;
Oh may I often, often hear,
And with those calls comply.

SERMON XIV.

LUKE xxii. 48.

Betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?

HERE every word is emphatical; and demands particular attention. It is one of those sentences, which, like lightning, blazes forth from the lips of injured goodness, and carries with it irresistible conviction to the heart.

I. Observe the Person addressed—Judas.

He was one of Christ's little family; one who had been a constant hearer of his doctrine, an eye-witness of his miracles, and a close observer of the purity and benevolence of his life. One on whom the Saviour had conferred many benefits, and who had made an open profession of his name. Betrayest *thou!* . . . . There is something in this like the words of Cæsar to Brutus, when aiming a dagger at his heart; 'what thou, my son!' What thou, oh Judas—thou with whom I have so intimately conversed, and so often prayed! Thou, whom I have honoured with the apostleship, and who art indebted to me for all the favours with which thou art distinguished—betrayest *thou!*—It was an appeal which God made to his ancient people, What could I have done more to my vineyard, that I have not done to it? Such an appeal might Jesus have made to this traitor: Wherein have I wearied thee; testify against *me.* Have I been a barren wilderness, or a land of

drought? It is not an enemy who thus insults and reproaches me, for then I could have borne it; but it is thou, mine own familiar friend in whom I trusted, and who hast eaten of my bread, that hast lifted up thy heel against me. It is not improbable that the apostle Paul had Judas in view, when he said, I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away. A profession not crowned with sincerity, will be followed with apostacy. A minister without grace is one of the most abominable, and is likely to be one of the most miserable of all creatures. He may be useful to others, and yet himself be lost; he may minister to their comfort, and after all be himself eternally miserable.

II. Observe, the Person speaking—Jesus.

Betrayest thou *me*, even me, who have assumed human nature for the good of mankind, and whose whole life has been one continued scene of benevolence and love? Wherein have I offended thee; what injury have I done thee? Hast thou found me to be a hard master, rigorous in my requirements, severe in my resentments, and backward in my retributions? Who is he that convinceth me of sin? Could Satan by whom thou art instigated, lay any thing to my charge? Didst not thou thyself consent to the applauding multitude, when they said, he hath done all things well? Many good works have I showed thee from the Father; for which of those works dost thou betray me?

It is observable, that Jesus on this occasion calls himself "the Son of man," not in contradiction to his supreme Divinity; for though he took on him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of sinful flesh, he at the same time thought it no robbery to be equal with God. If Christ were not truly and properly divine, he could not be our Redeemer and Saviour; our faith in him would be vain, and our hope delusive.

And though he is called the Son of Man, he was not properly so; he was the Seed of the woman; but not the Son of man; being conceived in a miraculous manner, by the overshadowing of the Holy Ghost. Thus it was foretold by the prophet, and also by an angel previous to his birth. "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." Isa. vii. 14. Matt. i. 18—23.

The title which Jesus here assumes, in calling himself the Son of man, may teach us the following things.—

1. That he is really and properly man, as well as truly divine. In the assumption of our nature, he was found in fashion as a man; he took on him the seed of Abraham, and was made in the likeness of sinful flesh. There were some in the early ages of the church who supposed that the body of Christ was only an aerial substance, not flesh and blood, but having the form and appearance of it; imagining that it was incompatible with divinity to become really incarnate. Against this error, the apostle John bears his testimony in the following words. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us—That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the Word of Life; for the Life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal Life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us—Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God; and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God. And this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof you have heard that it should come, and even now already is it in the world." John i. 14. 1 John i. 1, 2. iv. 2, 3.

The doctrine of Christ's incarnation is of such importance, that it is fundamental to the truth of the gospel, and to every doctrine contained in it. For if Christ

re not really a man, he could not have made atonement; "for every high priest is ordained to offer gifts l sacrifices; wherefore it is of necessity that this man ve somewhat also to offer. Hence, when he cometh o the world, he saith, sacrifice and offering thou uldst not, but a body hast thou prepared me." If incarnation were a fiction, his death, and resurrec-n, and ascension would be a fiction also, and the ıpel would not be true. Then would our faith be n, and we are yet in our sins. Christ was really d, and it was necessary that he should be so, in ler that he might satisfy divine justice: he was really n, and it was equally necessary that he should be in order that he might suffer. Hence it is that the ıod of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all

2. The phrase, Son of Man, seems intended to denote meanness of Christ's origin, and the poverty of his tward condition. He was as a root out of a dry ɔund, despised and rejected, a man of sorrows and ɥuainted with grief. The term is also used in a ninutive sense, as in Job xxv. 6, and other places. The stars are not pure in his sight; how much less n that is a worm, and the Son of man which is a worm." is also used in the same way in the Psalms, and aped to Christ in the New Testament. "For one in a tain place testifieth, saying, What is man, that thou mindful of him; or the Son of Man, that thou visitest n?" In the original it reads, not the son of a noble or ıstrious person, but of a mean and infirm man; and ɜo used as a term of contempt, expressive of humiliaı and abasement. This name has been given to ne of the prophets, in order, as has been supposed, ıt they might not be lifted up with pride, through the undance of their revelations, but be taught to form right estimate of themselves. They were earthen ssels, though filled with heavenly treasure. Man is ɔoor thing; in his best estate he is altogether vanity;

that thou lovest me, when thy heart is not with me? love is counterfeit, thy hatred real, and rendered odious by this base dissimulation.

The sin of Judas was against light and knowl and contrary to the rules of ordinary friendship the effect of sudden surprise, like Peter's denial Lord; but of forethought and deliberation. circumstance under which his crime was comm tended to render it more heinous and aggra Hence our Lord observed, it had been good fo man if he had never been born; or that a mill were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the c of the sea. It had been better for him not to known the way of righteousness, than after h known it, to turn from the holy commandment. happened unto him according to the true proverb dog is turned to his own vomit again; and th that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire. ii. 21, 22.

And are we in no danger of betraying Christ Have we not done it already? It is true we c betray his person, for he is far out of our reach, he laughs at the rage of the heathen, and has enemies in derision. But may we not betray his by giving it up into the hands of his adversaries? apostle speaks of some who denied the Lord that b them; and those who deny the divinity and aton of Christ, the fulness of his merit, and the freen his grace, appear to be chargeable with this eno guilt. We are also in danger of betraying our and Saviour, when, instead of supporting and defe his cause and interest, we grow careless and indif about it, and so weaken the hands of those who promote it. And though we cannot betray Cl person, yet may we not betray his people? and tl we cannot betray the Master, yet may we not betr servant? Nay, more than betray—oppress, impov and ruin them! In these respects, Christ has often

etrayed; and amongst the professors of his gospel, here will always be some to act the part of Judas.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. We have here a loud call to be jealous of our wn hearts, and to exercise a holy watchfulness over hem. We have all too much of Judas in us, the same vil heart of unbelief, departing from the living God; e seeds of the same malice, envy, deceit, and covetusness. And had we been in his situation, are we are that we should not have acted a similar part, much s we now abhor it? Perhaps if any one had suggested o him a few months, or weeks, or even days before, hat he would betray his Master, he would have replied ith indignation, as Hazael did to the prophet, Is thy ervant a dog, that he should do this thing? We do ot know our own hearts, till the strong temptation coperates with some powerful corruption; then are we ikely to know more of ourselves than we did before, nd to feel how much we are indebted to preventing nd preserving grace. Let him therefore who thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall. Our Lord said to his followers, Remember Lot's wife; and we may say, Remember Judas!

More especially, if we regard our immortal interests, et us carefully avoid the following things—(1) Selfonfidence. The most confident are of all others the ost likely to fall, and the self-diffident to stand fast, nd endure to the end. The fear of falling is a good ecurity against it.—(2) The secret indulgence of any in: this was the ruin of Judas. He was of a covetous isposition; and an inordinate desire of gain induced im to do that which led him to perdition. The love f money is the root of all evil. Take heed, and beware of covetousness.—(3) Beware of a profession without principle, the form of godliness without the power. Those who have no root in themselves, will

soon wither away. As the fire devoureth the stub and the flame consumeth the chaff, so their root s be as rottenness, and their blossom shall go up as d Isa. v. 24.

2. We say how far a person may go in the wa heaven, and yet fall short of it. As God leads s by the gates of hell, in their way to heaven; so devil leads others by the gates of heaven, in their to hell. Judas no doubt had great gifts; he prea perhaps many excellent sermons, wrought many derful miracles, and might be the means of conver many souls to God; and yet at last, he went to his place! Oh professor! thou mayest not be far from kingdom of heaven, and yet never get thither. higher thou art raised, the lower and more dreadful be thy fall!

3. Let us admire and adore the infinite wisdo God, who brought so much real good out of so n aggravated evil. The treachery of Judas, the p lanimity of Pilate, and the cruelty of the high pri all prepared the way for the fulfilment of God's cious purposes, in the salvation of his people; thou may be said of each of them, as of the king of Assyri meant not so, neither did his heart think so. Thus of the eater, came forth meat, and sweetness out of strong. He maketh the wrath of man to praise and the remainder of wrath will he restrain. G counsels are wise and gracious, when men's intent are cruel and unjust. "Of a truth, against thy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the peopl Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoeve hand and thy counsel determined before to be do Acts iv. 27, 28.

SERMON XV.

Acts i. 25.

Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place.

From the high and honourable state of the Apostleship he fell, by a foul transgression; and the word is so expressed, as to denote that it was attended with singular aggravation. It was indeed a transgression, peculiar to himself, and of which no other person had been guilty in the same way; a sin which had never been committed before, and which could never be repeated. The Jews with wicked hands crucified the Lord of life and glory, and Judas with a wicked heart betrayed him. He did this, not from any sudden gust of passion, or from any unkindness which he had received from his Master; but from an insatiable thirst for filthy lucre. As many sell their souls for the love of the world, so Judas sold the Saviour of souls for an increase of the worldly possessions; and to this he was instigated by him, who was a murderer from the beginning. John xiii. 27.

I have sinned, said he afterwards, in that I have betrayed innocent blood. Yes, he sinned against express warnings, and the most awful threatenings; such as had alarmed the fears of the rest of the disciples, and caused among them great searchings of heart, each crying out, Lord, is it I? Yet Judas persevered until he had received the sop; and then Satan entered into

him, and forsook him not, till his purpose was completed. His conduct was also tinctured with the basest ingratitude: he who dipped his hand in the dish with Christ, lifted up his heel against him. He who was supported by his bounty, betrayed him into the hands of his enemies.

The consequence of all this was, that "he went to his own place." The justice of God, and a regard to his own government, required that such a miscreant should meet with a signal and ignominious end, as a warning to all future generations. Divine vengeance followed him in this world. He laid violent hands upon himself, he gave up his ill-gotten gains, and became his own executioner. It also pursued him in the next: his mangled corpse being left for interment, or for the fowls of the air, his miserable soul went to its own place: not to heaven, for nothing that is defiling, or that worketh abomination, can enter therein; nor yet to purgatory, for that is only a fiction to fill the pockets of the priests, and empty those of the deluded people. Hell was Judas's own place; that state of punishment which God has prepared for apostate angels, and finally impenitent and apostate sinners of mankind. Those awful words of David concerning Ahitophel, appear to have a prophetic allusion to the miserable Judas, who was in some respects the antitype of David's hypocritical friend: "Let death seize upon him, and him go down quick into hell!" Psal. lv. 12—15.

I. Let us take a brief view of this awful pit of destruction.

It is called a place, and Judas's "own place." No one indeed can give a full and accurate description of it, on this side the burning gulph; for as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him; so neither can we conceive the

punishment that he will inflict on his implacable enemies. Though hell, as well as heaven, may rather be considered as a state than a place; yet as it is here called a place, it is under that view that we are now led to consider it.

1. It is a place both deep and large, sufficient to contain the whole number of the finally impenitent. As there is room enough in God's house above, which is provided with mansions sufficient for all his friends; so there is room enough in the infernal regions for all his enemies. In both there are many mansions, and they will all be occupied. Hell is called the bottomless pit, to intimate its vast extent; and though the miserable will be sinking deeper and deeper into it, through myriads of ages, they will never find the bottom. The prophet's description is awfully sublime. Tophet is ordained of old, says he; yea, for the king it is prepared, he hath made it deep and large: the pile thereof is fire, and much wood, the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it. Isa. xxx. 33.

2. It is a dark and dreadful place. A horrid gloom spreads through it, and fills with amazing terror and distress, all its inhabitants. The thoughts of it are sufficient to make the most intrepid mind to shudder; much more to look into it; more still to dwell in it for ever.

"A dungeon horrible, on all sides round,
As one great furnace flamed; yet from these flames
No light, but rather darkness visible,
Served only to discover sights of woe,
Regions of sorrow, doleful shades, where peace
And rest can never dwell, hope never comes,
That comes to all: but torture without end
Still urges, and a fiery deluge fed
With ever-burning sulphur unconsumed."

It is called outer darkness, and the blackness of darkness for ever. Darkness without any mixture of light;

no light of comfort, no light of hope; and the ligl knowledge, which is still possessed, tends only to petuate and increase the misery.

3. The place is strong and durable, so that t who are once there, can never break out. Its ı are impregnable, its gates of brass, and its bars of i The heavenly kingdom suffers violence; not so kingdom of darkness. To the rich man in torm Abraham said, Between us and you there is a gulph fixed; so that those who would pass from h to you, cannot; neither can they pass to us, that w come from thence. Those who are fixed in hes would not; those who are fixed in hell, cannot ch their abode. The door of hell will be for ever upon the wicked and ungodly, as the door of he will be for ever shut against them. All hope will be at an end; all seeking and striving, utterly in ı When once the master of the house is risen up, and shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open us; he shall answer and say unto you, I know yoı whence you are; depart from me all ye workers oı quity—there shall be weeping and gnashing of tı Luke xiii. 24—28.

II. Enquire why this is called Judas's "own pl

1. Because it was ordained for him, as it is fc who are finally impenitent. If it might be said of s that "God hath not appointed them to wrath, bı obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ;" it be said of others who will not obtain salvation, God hath appointed them to wrath, as the punishı of their iniquity. The apostle found that certain crept in unawares among them, "who were befo old ordained to this condemnation; ungodly men, t ing the grace of our God into lasciviousness, denying the only Lord God, and our Lord J

Christ." Impenitent and irreclaimable sinners prepare themselves for destruction, and destruction is prepared for them. "Unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word; being disobedient, whereunto also they were appointed." And if for those who sin wilfully after they have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries—surely Judas must come under this description. If ever there was a reprobate on earth, he was one. He rejected the only atonement in the blood of Christ, and was guilty of treading under foot the Son of God. When he died, therefore, he went to his own place. 1 Thess. v. 9. Heb. x. 26---29. 1 Peter ii. 7, 8. Jude 4.

2. It was prepared for him. As mansions in heaven are prepared for the saints, according to their various capacities and attainments; so hell is prepared for the wicked, according to their deserts, and every one shall reap that which he has sown. This hell of fire was originally prepared for the devil and his angels; for as they were the first sinners, they are the first to be punished; but apostate men, who follow their example, will be cast into it, and have their portion in the lake which burneth for ever and ever. As Nebuchadnezzar prepared his burning fiery furnace for those who did not worship his golden image; so God has prepared his furnace, heated seven times hotter than that, for all those who refuse to worship him, in spirit and in truth. He is so incensed against impenitent and unbelieving sinners, who reject the message of his Son, that he takes as it were time and thought to render their punishment more exquisite. It is an idea that enhances the future glory of the saints, that it was prepared for them from before the foundation of the world; and the tor-

ments of the wicked will be the greater, from having been long prepared, and Tophet being ordained of old. The fire has been burning for ages and ages past, a fire that will never be quenched, but which becomes more intense, from the continual accession of fresh materials, heaping up wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God. Oh how fearful it is to fall into the hands of the living God! Can thine heart endure, or can thine hands be strong, in the day that I shall deal with thee? I the Lord have spoken, and will do it. Ezek. xxii. 14.

3. It was in effect what he had chosen, and therefore it was his own place. Those who love sin rather than holiness, and prefer sensual gratifications to the pleasures of true religion, may be said to prefer hell to heaven. They that hate me, says Wisdom, love death. Those who reject salvation, act as if they were in love with destruction. They choose their own delusions, and God gives them up to their heart's desire. They prefer the company of the wicked, their pleasures and pursuits, and every thing that leads to destruction, though they flatter themselves that they shall escape it. When they die, they go to their own place; to that place to which sin naturally leads them, and into which it will inevitably plunge them. Nor can they say that God does them any wrong; for he only leaves them to the dreadful consequences of their own voluntary choice.

4. The expression, "his own place," seems more especially to intimate that peculiar place which God the righteous Judge had assigned him, as the reward of his unparalleled iniquity. It points out not only his misery, but its nature and degree; as it said of some, that, they shall receive greater damnation; so of Judas, the nethermost hell should be his portion. The foresight of his treachery, induced the Saviour to say, The Son of man goeth as it is written of him; but woe unto that *man* by whom the Son of man is betrayed. Hence

Judas is emphatically styled, the Son of perdition, intimating that amongst men he was the heir and the first-born of eternal misery. All who die in unbelief, will go to destruction; but as his sin in this world was singular and unparalleled, such should be his punishment, in the next. Hell is Judas's own place; it is his by right of inheritance, and by way of pre-eminence. Amongst apostate men, he was the greatest of all sinners, and is doomed to the greatest of all sufferings. There he is at home, in his own place, whence he originated, and to which he is returned. If Satan be supreme amongst the angels of the bottomless pit, Judas is no less supreme in misery amongst apostate men.

Let hypocrites and carnal professors tremble at this example, and beware of envy, pride, and covetousness, which led to such an issue! Let us each tremble for ourselves, and ask our own souls, whither are we going, and in what place shall we be found another day! Our bodies will be laid in the dust, and perhaps the place of their interment may already have been pointed out; but where will be the everlasting abode of the immortal soul? We shall all go to our own place—the place for which either sin or grace has prepared us, and shall be associated in the other world with those whom we have made our companions in this. Of the wicked it shall be said, "As he loved cursing, so let it come unto him; as he delighted not in blessing, so let it be far from him. As he clothed himself with cursing like as with a garment; so let it come into his bowels like water, and like oil into his bones." While of the righteous it shall be said, "Thou hast given him his heart's desire, and hast not withholden the request of his lips. He asked life of thee, and thou gavest it him, even length of days for ever and ever. The wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal." Matt. xxv. 46.

SERMON XVI.

HEBREWS vi. 17.

Heirs of promise.

SUCH is the love that God bears to his people, that he is willing not only that they should be comforted, but abundantly so; that they should not only have consolation, but strong consolation; so as to be raised above all their despondencies, supported under the severest trials, and animated to the most difficult services. For this purpose he has spoken many gracious things concerning them; and, as if his word of promise were not sufficient, he has confirmed his promise with an oath. This renders it steadfast and immutable, and ought to put an end to all strife between him and the doubting soul. It is astonishing, not to believe what God says, seeing that he is faithfulness itself; a God of truth, and without iniquity, just and right is he. It is still more astonishing, not to believe what he swears. When he swears in his wrath, that the wicked shall not enter into his rest, it should make the impenitent to tremble; and when he swears in mercy and in love, it should cause the humble christian to rejoice. His dignity and glory will not suffer him to affix an oath to any thing that is unimportant, nor his veracity and truth, to any thing that is precarious or uncertain. Wherever the divine Being condescends to employ this solemn form of attestation, it is to intimate the infinite importance

of the truth attested, and to excite in us the full assurance of faith.

I. Consider wherein the portion of believers consists: they are "heirs of promise."

Though they have little in possession, they have much in prospect; if not rich in enjoyment, they are rich in faith and hope. Amongst men, promises are often of little worth, and lightly regarded; but all the promises of God are yea and amen in Christ Jesus, unto the glory of God by us. They are expressive of his all-sufficiency, suited to the wants and wishes of his people, and are exceeding great and precious.

1. With regard to their subject matter, they include all things pertaining both to life and godliness; ensuring support in this world, and glory in the world to come. Temporal blessings are freely promised, as well as spiritual, and are frequently implied where they are not expressed. He hath given meat unto them that fear him; he will ever be mindful of his covenant. Bread shall be given, and thy water shall be sure. Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. He that spared not his own Son, but freely delivered him up for us all; how shall he not with him also freely give us all things. My God shall supply all your need: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.—Such and so abundant are the promises relating to this life; and still more numerous and more precious are those which relate to the life to come.

2. There are promises made to the church in general, and others to individual believers; and both are the portion of the saints. Of the former it is said, God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved; God shall help her, and that right early. On this rock will I build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.—Promises also are made to individuals, for

their comfort and encouragement, and which are applicable to all the saints. He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. My grace is sufficient for thee; my strength is made perfect in weakness. Fear not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God. As thy day is, so shall thy strength be. Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God; and let us also place unlimited confidence in his faithfulness and truth.

3. The promises of God are either absolute or conditional. Some of the promises are absolute, not suspended on any act or endeavour of ours, or on any previous qualification or preparation of any kind; and such are all those which relate to the first bestowment of grace. For who maketh thee to differ; and what hast thou that thou hast not received? It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth; but of God that showeth mercy. For of him, and through him, and to him are all things. It is he that worketh in us to will and to do, according to his good pleasure; and by his grace alone we are what we are. Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us; but unto thy name give glory.—But there are promises conditional to grace received, and which are made only to those who believe. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance. God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble. If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

4. The divine promises have various degrees of accomplishment. Some have already been fulfilled, either in whole or in part; as in the case with those relating to the coming of Christ, the establishment of his kingdom, and the universal spread of the gospel. Some are daily fulfilling, and others are yet to be fulfilled. Such as relate to the destruction of antichrist, and

preparing the way for the spread of the gospel, are rapidly receiving their accomplishment, in the wonderful events of our own times; when God is shaking the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land, that the desire of all nations may come; but the calling of the Jews, and the fulness of the Gentiles, are events that are yet to come.—But it is more material to enquire—

II. Who are the "heirs" of promise, and what character do they bear.

It may be there are some to whom the promises belong, who nevertheless are unable to claim an interest in them, or make out their title in a clear and satisfactory manner. It is therefore of some importance to determine, by what means these heirs may be known, that each may ascertain his right.

1. They may be known by their perception of the promises themselves. They view them not only more distinctly and clearly, but in a light very different from that in which other persons either do or can consider them. They are represented as seeing them afar off, and being persuaded of them; but it is by an eye of faith that they discern them, and are taught to estimate their worth. In thy light, says the psalmist, shall we see light; not in the light of reason or of natural wisdom, but in that of the Holy Spirit. Thus they see the suitableness and excellency of the promises, that they are the fruit of free and unmerited love, and are adapted to all cases and circumstances. They also see that all the promises are confirmed in Christ Jesus, as the Mediator and Surety of the new and everlasting covenant, and that they were procured by his death. As David saw the commandments, so they see the promises to be exceeding broad. They view them sometimes as near, and not at a distance; and can appropriate as well as apprehend them. They can some-

times say with David, Remember thy word unto thy servant, on which thou hast caused me to hope. Carnal men may read the promises, hear them explained, give their assent, and understand something of their literal meaning; but it is the believer only who can say, How precious are thy thoughts unto me, O God; how great is the sum of them! They have not only heard, but tasted that the Lord is gracious. 1 Peter ii. 3.

2. The heirs of promise may be known by the powerful application of the promises to their own hearts. There may be pious individuals, who have walked in the light of God's countenance, and in the comforts of the Holy Ghost, who have not been the subjects of any remarkable or powerful impression, but who have enjoyed almost uninterrupted tranquillity and peace; yet it cannot be doubted that there are instances in which the Spirit of God has so strongly impressed a promise on the mind of a believer, and that promise so suited to his case and circumstances, as at once to dispel his doubts and fears, and fill him with joy and peace in believing. Impressions of this kind have, in many instances, carried their own evidence with them, that they came from God, and that the promise was applied for some important purpose; to afford immediate relief, in answer to fervent prayer, or stimulate to some arduous duty. Thus when Paul obtained that promise, My grace is sufficient for thee, at a time when he was pressed out of measure, beyond strength; he readily replied, Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. And where such believing applications are made, there it is we find the heirs of promise.

3. They may be known by the regard they bear towards them, and the desire they feel for their accomplishment. The promises contain all their salvation, and all their desire; they meditate therein both day and night, and view them with a satisfaction similar to that of a man who looks over the title deeds of an estate,

which secures to him the possession of a large inheritance. The promises are to them as good news from a far country, recalling the banished exile to his native home, or as a sealed pardon to the condemned malefactor. Notwithstanding all the difficulties and apparent impossibilities, that lie in the way of their accomplishment, they place the utmost confidence in them, and leave impossibilities with God. Against hope, they believe in hope, like Abraham, who staggered not at the promise through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded, that what he had promised, he was able also to perform. When the promises are delayed, they wait for their fulfilment; for it is not only through faith, but also through patience, that they are said to inherit them. In the midst of darkness, they wait for light; and when God is departed, they look for his return. Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God, until that he have mercy upon us. David also says, I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope. And while they thus wait upon the Lord, they will keep his way; and with unabating vigour and resolution, use all proper and appointed means to obtain what they are waiting for. Prayer and attendance upon the word and ordinances will be their delight; and while found in the path of duty, the Lord meets with them in a way of mercy. One of the best evidences of our interest in the promises, is our laying hold of them, and pleading them with God, as our only title to eternal life, and our only ground of hope for present good. We may do this with a trembling hand, conscious of our utter unworthiness; but the promises are like a golden chain; if we lay hold of one, we virtually lay hold of all the rest. If being persuaded of them, we embrace them, we shall finally receive their accomplishment, though at present we behold them only afar

off; for faith is the substance of things hoped fc the evidence of things not seen. It both evince reality and our title. Heb. xi. 1.

4. The practical effects which the promises p in us, are another means of showing who are the heirs; for every man that hath this hope in him fieth himself, even as Christ is pure. Exceedin and precious promises are given unto us, that t we might be partakers of the divine nature, escaped the corruption that is in the world throug If this transforming effect be not produced b lieving apprehension of the promises, in vain plead our interest in them. Supported by the h such a portion, believers can glory in tribulatio and say with the apostle, in all these things more than conquerors, through him that lov And when the promises produce in us a cheerfi universal obedience to the divine commands, aff a powerful stimulus to action; we have no rea suspect the hope we place in them, or the comf derive from them. If God's precepts are our co lors, we may without hesitation consider his pr as our portion. Whatever comes from God, wi to God; if therefore by our converse with the pr we become more spiritual, more dead to sin and world, and more diligent in the discharge of holy our hope in them is not presumption, nor will o pectations from them be cut off. The promise to Israel was, If ye will obey my voice indeed, an my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasur me above all people. It is thus that duty and pri are connected, and the latter, though not ensur ascertained by the former. Thus David exp himself: I have hoped for thy salvation, and do commandments. If influenced by holy principles sincere desire to glorify God, we are careful to ex *ourselves* unto godliness, we may safely conclud *the* promises are ours. For godliness is prof

o all things, having promise of the life that now is, l of that which is to come. 1 Tim. iv. 8.

IMPROVEMENT.

:. If not heirs of the promise, what are we? Heirs the curse—of that curse which cuts off on every side, l will one day enter into our bowels like water, and e oil into our bones. Heirs of wrath—of that wrath ich is inconceivable, both in its nature and effects; der which no one can support himself, and before it one can stand. Promises or threatenings, salvation destruction, must be our inevitable portion. There io neutrality, no middle state; believe and be saved, believe not and perish.

:. If heirs of the promises, we are interested in all blessings contained in them, relating both to this ·ld and that which is to come. If the promises are s, all things are ours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or ›has, or the word, or life, or death, or things present, hings to come; all are ours, and we are Christ's, l Christ is God's. To be heirs of such promises, nore than being heirs to a crown. The promises are d's bonds, and bonds are as good as ready money.

:. If heirs of the promises, we are heirs of God; all t he is and has, that is communicable, is made over is in a way of covenanted mercy. Hence the triumph he prophet, in the absence of all created good; and t of the psalmist, in preferring this good to every ier. Whom have I in heaven but thee; and there is ie on earth that I desire besides thee. Psal. lxxiii. Hab. iii. 16.

:. Being heirs of God, we are also joint heirs with rist Jesus, to whom the birth-right blessing properly ongs. The Father loveth the Son, and hath given things into his hands; he hath appointed him his r, and made him head over all things to the church. t being *united* to him by faith, we become interested

in all that he possesses, and he divides the portio among his brethren. He is the first-begotten from th dead, and hath in all things the pre-eminence; bu those who believe are admitted to participate his fulnes and to be with him where he is, to behold his glor They possess the same blessings, though not on th same ground, nor in an equal degree; all he has i given in reward of his obedience, and all we have i merely for his sake, and in virtue of our union with hin The faithful servant shall enter into the joy of his Lor and share with him the fruit of all his labour. "If an man serve me, let him follow me; and where I an there shall also my servant be; if any man serve m him will my Father honour." John xii. 26.

Some humble christians there are who doubt the interest in the promises, though God hath made the heirs; while others who have no such claim, are oft forward in preferring it. This should lead to self-e amination, and a close attention to the holy scripture There is that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing there is that maketh himself poor, yet hath great riche Let not this matter therefore go unconsidered, or re main undecided. Dreadful is his condition, who ha no interest in the promises: what has he to suppor him in poverty, in sickness, and in death? But wha ever be the circumstances attending the heirs of promis however poor in this world, or persecuted and despise they can rejoice and say with David, The lines ar fallen to me in pleasant places; yea, I have a good heritage. Psal. xvi. 6.

SERMON XVII.

HEBREWS xii. 14.

Follow peace with all men.

THE word peace is used very comprehensively in scripture, denoting all manner of happiness. It is more especially used in reference to our reconciliation with God, which is the only foundation of true and solid peace; and being procured by the blood of Christ, he is said to be our Peace, who hath made both one. And being justified by faith, which applies the atoning blood, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.—The term peace also denotes that reconciliation with our own consciences, which is the effect of reconciliation with God. The work of righteousness is peace, and assurance for ever. A man's own conscience is either his best friend, or his worst enemy. As concience smiles or frowns, approves or condemns him, he feels beforehand the torments of hell, or the joys of heaven. This is our rejoicing, even the testimony of our conscience, is the language of such as walk humbly and closely with God. Under the heaviest burdens, such are supported; amidst the greatest sorrows, they may rejoice.

The peace to which we are exhorted, relates to our fellow creatures, and the unity and concord which we are to preserve with them. Some are at variance with all mankind; their hand is against every man, and every man's hand against them. Hateful and hating one another, is the general character of the ungodly. But

things; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth.

3. We must endeavour to exercise those graces which have a pacific and uniting tendency. Of this description are humility, meekness, and love. If in lowliness of mind we learn to esteem others better than ourselves, we shall find but little occasion for strife and contention; and if with meekness and patience we can bear with one another, not avenging ourselves, not returning evil for evil, but forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us; we should soon find that peace would be preserved in our borders, and harmony and love universally prevail. There are some who know not how to deny themselves in any instance, but who are always insisting on what they call their rights, and the attention that is due to them; and if we would follow after peace, we must exercise self-denial on their behalf, and be willing rather to yield our claims and our interests, than to assert and defend them on every occasion. Of the exercise of such virtues it may be said, as Tertullus did of the actions of Felix, By them we enjoy much quietness.

4. As the desire of peace should excite to the exercise of grace, so also to the faithful discharge of duty. We should do unto others, as we would have others in like circumstances do unto us. This is the golden rule; and a proper attention to it would be productive of the most desirable effects. We should not only, with the apostle, avoid all just occasion of offence, to Jews or Gentiles, or to the church of God; but in our station and calling in life, render ourselves as useful as possible, that, like Mordecai, we may seek the wealth of our people, and speak peace to all our seed. It becomes us to be courteous and condescending in our deportment, neither envious of those in superior circumstances, nor haughty towards others whom providence has placed beneath us. Let us also forget ill services, and requite good ones. Above all, let us mark those who

would sow the seeds of strife and discord, and avoid them, as we would a rock or quicksand, or a house infected with the plague.

5. Let us remember that a mild and peaceable disposition is one of the greatest ornaments to the Christian character. In this we shall resemble the ever blessed God, who is emphatically stiled the God of peace. Jesus is also called the Prince of peace, and his gospel is the gospel of peace; his followers therefore ought to be men of peace, as it is in this way only they can exemplify the spirit which he possessed, and which he inculcates. Jerusalem, which was compacted together, was the glory of all the earth. It was likewise the honour of primitive believers, that they were of one heart and of one soul; and it is the peculiar felicity of the heavenly world, that no strife or contention, no envyings or confusion, can enter there. Love is the most gratifying of all the passions; peace as well as pleasure is the natural result; and where that is, safety and contentment dwell. If we bite and devour one another, we may expect to be consumed one of another. But if we live in love and peace, the God of love and peace will be with us; and, after a few more rising and setting suns, we may hope to be with him for ever.—But we proceed to consider,

II. The extent of the duty: "Follow peace *with all men*."

Not merely are we to cultivate this disposition with a few, who may be of an amiable temper, but with all men, so far as our intercourse or our influence may extend. The greatest churls, the vilest sinners are not excepted. If they injure us, we must not injure them. If they do not seek peace with us, or if they even prove averse to it, we must nevertheless seek peace and pursue it.

1. We must follow after peace with men of all

ranks and conditions in life. We should behave with reverence towards those above us, and with courtesy and condescension towards those below us; avoiding on the one hand a proud and haughty spirit, and on the other, whatever is mean and grovelling. A favour from the rich and great should be thankfully received, and to the poor it should be easily granted. "Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee, turn not thou away." Thus the blessing of him that is ready to perish, shall come upon us, and the widow's heart shall sing for joy. If men will praise us when we do well for ourselves, much more when we do well for others, and make their interests our own. Of the righteous it is said, "He hath dispersed, he hath given to the poor; his righteousness endureth for ever, his horn shall be exalted with honour." Psal. cxii. 9.

2. With men of various tempers and dispositions. If masters are froward, servants should be submissive; not answering again, but endeavouring to please them well in all things. If neighbours are unkind, ye must be patient towards them, and towards all men. With the froward, God will shew himself froward; and we must leave our cause with him. He knows how to bring down high looks, and to save his afflicted people. Some of them indeed are like Jonah, peevish and fretful, and their temper may try our patience; yet it becomes us to treat them with pity, rather than contempt. The ill natured carriage of others will be no excuse for our own. Virtue of every kind shines the brighter, when contrasted with its opposite, and gains a victory over it. Even where our interests meet with competition, we must still be followers of peace, and bear good will to all. "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." (Phil. ii. 4.)

3. We must follow peace with men of every character and description, let their principles be what they

may; with the righteous and the unrighteous, with both saints and sinners, in the church and in the world. The exhortation extends to "all men," be they who they may; and though we are not to make companions of the wicked, we are to treat them with benevolence and kindness, so as to attach them to religion, rather than render them more averse. It is possible to engage their attention, and gain their confidence, by an interchange of kind offices; and this may prove the blessed means of drawing them to Christ. Hence the apostle's exhortation: "Walk in wisdom towards them that are without; let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man." Col. iv. 5, 6.

4. Christians of other denominations, and of different religious sentiments, are entitled to our attention and benevolent regard. To confine our love to those who think as we do, is to love our own image, rather than the image of Christ. Difference in lesser matters should not cause any alienation of affection. Others, on this account, would have the same reason to be bitter against us, as we have against them; for they differ no more from us than we do from them; and perhaps after all, the difference is more about words than things. If christians will not love one another till they all come to be of one mind, they may even lay aside that duty till they get to heaven; yet those who lay it aside on that account, do not seem as if they were going thither. Peter calls Paul his beloved brother, though Paul had withstood him to the face; and where men are found upright and sincere before God, they require to be loved for his sake.

5. We must follow peace, even with our enemies. We must do good, where nothing but evil is to be expected in return. Dearly beloved, says the apostle, avenge not yourselves. Stephen prayed for his persecutors and murderers, crying out with his dying breath, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. Jesus

did the same: Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. The conduct of David also, in a time of persecution, was similar to that of David's Lord. False witnesses, says he, did rise up; they laid to my charge things that I knew not; they rewarded me evil for good, to the spoiling of my soul. But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth: I humbled my soul with fasting, and my prayer returned into my own bosom. I behaved myself as though he had been my friend or brother: I bowed down heavily, as one that mourneth for his mother.—Such likewise is the spirit which Jesus inculcates on all his followers: I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven. Psal. xxxv. 11—14. Matt. v. 44, 45.

To conclude: if peace be so important, and so essential to the christian character, let us labour by all means to preserve it in our families, and immediate connections. Without this, they will not be Bethels, but Bethavens, houses of vanity. If discord prevails in a family, duties will be neglected, or disagreeably performed. Holy hands cannot be lifted up, where there is either wrath or doubting. Peace ought especially to be cultivated in the church of Christ; for that is the dwelling place of the God of peace. Contention has been the ruin of many religious societies, otherwise in a state of prosperity. Strife among the professed disciples of a meek and lowly Saviour, dishonours religion, stumbles the good, and opens the mouths of the wicked. The staff of beauty will not continue whole, if the staff of bands be broken; nor can the unity of the Spirit be preserved, but in the bonds of peace. In all our concerns, and in all our intercourse with mankind, it becomes us to be lovers of peace, makers of peace, and maintainers of peace. If this temper universally prevailed, under the influence of

istian principles, earth would soon become a little ıven, and the glory of the Lord would be revealed. t then all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and mour, and evil speaking be put away from you, with malice; and be ye kind one to another, tender rted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's e hath forgiven you. Ephes. iv. 31, 32.

Oh bless'd society
Of saints in friendship joined;
From envy, wrath, and malice free,
In words and actions kind!

No strife but to excel,
No hatred but of sin;
A perfect harmony without,
Substantial peace within.

Each other's joys they feel,
Each other's griefs they share;
Unite in melody of praise,
And all the force of prayer.

Thus, in the world above,
Myriads surround the throne;
Hear how they sing, see how they love,
For all their hearts are one.

SERMON XVIII.

HEBREWS xii. 14.

And holiness, without which no man shall see the

VALUABLE as peace is, we are not to sacrifice or righteousness in order to obtain it. We are manded to "love the truth and peace," and no without the other. Hence, when the apostle ex us to follow peace with all men, he adds, "and hol without which no man shall see the Lord." The is to be the object of our ardent pursuit, equally the former; and it is only by that means we are to obtain it. The more we have of the mind of C and are assimilated to his holy likeness, the mo shall be disposed for peace, and the better prepa follow after it.

The words before us, divide themselves into parts: they prescribe to us a duty—and sugge most powerful motive for its performance.

I. Explain the exhortation: "Follow after holi

Men in general make no pretension to holiness some who do, know not what it is. Many im that it consists merely in chastity, or putting a res upon the sensual appetite, which is only a part branch of that purity to which we are here exh Others suppose that it extends no farther than to ou decency of conduct, or general regularity of behav so that in their opinion he was a very holy young who said, All these things have I observed fro

youth up. Holiness with them is no more than an escape from the grosser pollutions that are in the world, an abstinence from open and presumptuous sins, connected perhaps with a profession of religion in its purest modes and forms. But all this may be where the nature is unsanctified, the governing principle unchanged, and where the love of sin and enmity to God remain in all their force.

Though these things do not constitute real holiness, but fall very far short of it; neither does it imply an absolute freedom from all imperfections, as some have vainly imagined. Sorrow for sin, and a hatred of it, take place in every renewed heart, but not an entire exemption from its being. The apostle Paul, who was one of the holiest men on earth, did not profess to have attained it, though he pressed hard after it. Instead of this, he cried out, Oh, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death! Perfect holiness is the privilege not of earth, but heaven. Freedom from the power of sin is the happiness of all who are truly pious, but not a freedom from its existence. The Canaanites will dwell in the land, though Israel be in possession; they may be brought into subjection, though not fully destroyed. Various conquests may be made; but it is death alone that completes the victory. The scriptures declare, that "there is not a just man upon earth, who liveth and sinneth not." And Job, when speaking of himself, says, "If I wash myself with snow water, and make my hands never so clean: yet shalt thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me." Sin will not die till we die. It is in the upper world where the spirit of just men are made perfect; they are just now, but not perfect, nor will be, till this mortal shall put on immortality, and this corruptible put on incorruption.

Holiness, however, though it is not in the present life what some make it to be, nor what the saints wish it to be, yet it is the beauty and ornament of the soul.

All moral excellences are included in it; and all spiritual consolations, which is the purest and most satisfying consolation, is derived from it. It is our brightest resemblance to God; our principal glory in this world, and our highest happiness in the next.—Let us attend to the following brief particulars, relative to its nature and properties.

1. Holiness is the fruit of sovereign and effectual grace. God, before whom the angels veil their faces and cover their feet, from a view of his infinite purity, is its immediate author, and he it is that produces it in us by the agency of his blessed Spirit. He who brooded over chaos, producing beauty, order, and variety, out of a confused heap of undigested matter, renews, sanctifies, and adorns the soul of man, when he calls us out of darkness into his marvellous light. He hath saved us and called us, says the apostle, with a holy calling. To cleanse the unclean, and to make sinful creature holy, is the work of omnipotent grace; for that which is born of the flesh is and will be flesh. And who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one. Or can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may those also do good, who are accustomed to do evil. The Lord therefore claims it as his own work, both to justify and to sanctify the ungodly, according to that promise: "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh." Ezek. xxxvi. 25, 26.

2. True holiness is seated in the heart. It is not an outward name, but an inward nature; a divine principle implanted, an incorruptible seed sown in the heart. Thou desirest truth in the inward parts, says the royal penitent; and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom. Holiness is a conformity to

the mind and will of God. His law is written, and his image is impressed on the heart; which contains all the principles of vital and practical religion. A heart formed according to the discovery which God has made of himself in Christ Jesus, and cast into the mould of the gospel, is a holy heart, and such an one as he requires. Religion, to be real, must be internal: for he is not a Jew that is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew that is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God. And our Lord tells us, that out of the abundance of the heart a good man bringeth forth good things. New principles are imparted, and the current of the soul is turned from sin to God, from earth to heaven; and where this is the case, there will be a holy life and conversation.

3. Holiness is not a single grace, but an assemblage of all the graces, and extends to all the duties of the christian life. A good man aims at universal obedience, such an obedience as has the whole man for the subject of it, and the whole of the divine law as its rule and standard. Part with those lusts, says God. Yes, says the christian: let no iniquity have dominion over me. Cast away those idols, says God. Yea, says he; what have I any more to do with idols. Go, sacrifice thy son, says God to Abraham; and he rises up early in the morning to perform it. Some duties are difficult and laborious, some costly and dangerous; but if the bent and bias of the soul be for God, it will start back from nothing that he requires. None of these things move me, says Paul; neither count I my life dear unto myself, that I may finish my course with joy. Every christian, in a greater or less degree, possesses the same spirit; and it is essential to his character that it should be so. Holiness is, as we have said, not a single grace, but a constellation of the christian graces, or the varied modification of love.

It is like the anointing oil with which the vessels of the sanctuary were to be consecrated, and which was to be compounded of the choicest spices which the art of the apothecary could produce. It is not like a single luminary, but a constellation, where numerous planets intermingle their lustre and their beauty, and give additional brightness to the whole. It is not meekness, humility, faith, hope, or charity; but all these united. Thus the church, the spouse of Christ, is described as coming up out of the wilderness, perfumed with myrrh, and frankincense, and all powders of the merchant. The principle of true religion is like a grain of mustard seed, which grows into a great tree. It is the little leaven which leaveneth the whole lump.

4. All true holiness in man is through the mediation of Christ, and is derived from him as the Head of his mystical body. We are sanctified in Christ Jesus, and called to be saints. He of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Grace was given us in him, from before the foundation of the world; and is communicated to us through his death and intercession. "Unto every one of us is given grace, according to the measure of the gift of Christ;" grace of the same nature, though not in the same degree. In him it is a fountain; in us it is a gently flowing stream; yet it has the same direction, and tends to the same end. Holiness in Christ is natural and essential; to us it is communicated as a free gift. In him it is concentrated, like light in the sun; in us it is as light in the air, emanating from his fulness. We begin to be holy, when we begin to know Christ; and we grow in holiness as we increase in the knowledge of him. Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord. Sanctifying grace is not only derived from Christ, but it *assimilates* us to his likeness. The more holy the *members* of his mystical body are, the more they

emble their glorious head; and as far as we partake his spirit, and walk in his steps, so far we are holy, l no farther. Real saints are a living image of the 'isible Saviour.

5. True holiness is an abiding principle, consisting the habitual rectitude of all the powers and faculties :he soul. It is a well of water springing up, amidst umerable obstructions, to eternal life; a light that neth more and more, unto the perfect day. The irit of holiness dwells in all the saints, preserving m, through all the dangers of the way, from final stacy and everlasting ruin. This work of the rd, like all his other works, is perfect; at least it ll be carried on to perfection, so that those who ve begun in the Spirit, shall not end in the flesh, but ll hold on their way, waxing stronger and stronger. e christian's aim, with respect to himself, is the fecting of holiness in the fear of God. This is at he strives after, and labours to attain; and this God's end in all his dispensations towards him. hether he smile or frown, draw near, or keep at a tance, it is that we may be made partakers of his liness, and that in an increasing degree. Those o seek after holiness shall always find it, and those o love it shall never lose it.

6. We are to "follow" after holiness, so as to make the object of intense and continual pursuit; to leave duty unperformed, no means untried, in order to tain it in a still higher degree. For this purpose let search the holy scriptures, attend upon holy ordinces, keep company with holy men, and be daily nversant with holy things. Above all, let us earnestly plore the powerful influences of the holy Spirit; for it is that worketh all our works in us, and is himself e fountain of purity. It is according to his mercy at he saves us, by the washing of regeneration, and *newing of the* Holy Ghost. Titus iii. 5.

II. Consider the motive by which the exhortat is enforced: "without holiness no man shall see Lord."

1. Observe: "no man," no individual, not on all the human race; whatever be his expectation attainments, whatever opinion he may have of hims or whatever opinion others may entertain concern him. Not one of all the sons of men, whatever n be his nation or kindred; wherever he may have b born, or in whatever city, town, or country he n reside. Tribulation and anguish shall be upon ev soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and a to the gentile. In whatever circumstances or co tion in life he may be found, whether clothed in pur or in rags, faring sumptuously every day, or not hav bread to eat, in honour or disgrace—without holin no man shall see the Lord. He accepteth not the p sons of princes, nor regardeth the rich more than poor, for they are all the work of his hands. Wh ever his moral character may be, whether outwar decent or profane, a formal professor or a bitter p secutor, an advocate for religion or an avowed enem whatever his denomination may be, whether a pa or a protestant, churchman or dissenter, baptised infancy or in riper years;—if he be unholy, if he l and die in sin, his doom is irreversibly fixed. The l pronounces a curse upon him, and the gospel affo him no relief.

2. He shall not "see the Lord." It is as it w written over the gate of heaven, Nothing enters h that defileth. Carnal, unregenerate men, shall n see God's face. Ezra, that holy reformer in Isra said, "Oh, my God, I am ashamed, and blush to lift my face to thee, my God." How much more w *wicked* men be ashamed and confounded hereaft *when they* will be made to feel their depravity a *vileness*, and when God shall appear so unlike w

they thought him to be,—a God of infinite purity, and a consuming fire! They shall not see him, and live. Shame and dismay will seize on those in the world to come, who had no penitential shame in this. They will also be afraid to see him, when he shall appear in the glory of his majesty; and in the terrors of his wrath. They have broken his laws, and despised his mercy, and now every refuge fails them. They will cry to the rocks and to the mountains to hide them from his presence, and to screen them from his indignations; for the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand! The sinners in Zion are afraid, fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites: who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings? The wicked shall indeed have a sight of God, in some respects; but it shall be to their everlasting sorrow and confusion. They shall behold him as Balaam did, but not nigh; at an awful unapproachable distance they shall see him, but not for themselves; as a judge and avenger, but not as a friend or a father. When Christ cometh in the clouds of heaven, every eye shall see him. Those who did not and would not see him before, and who would fain avoid seeing him now, shall be compelled to behold him, to their inexpressible grief and dismay; for the day of revelation will be to them a day of destruction. Those who did not see him by the eye of faith before, shall then see him with their bodily eyes. Those who did not see him in his providences or in his ordinances, shall then behold him upon his judgment seat; and every glance of his majesty, justice, and purity, shall be as a messenger of death to their souls. They shall see him, but they shall have no enjoyment of him, no communion with him; they shall have such a perception of his excellency and glory, as shall add to their misery and torment, but no sense of his love and favour. They shall not see him in heaven; only *from the hell of* fire shall they behold him.

3. "Without holiness" no man shall see the Lord. Not that holiness is the meritorious or procuring cause of salvation; for when we have done all that we can do, even through divine assistance, we are unprofitable servants. Holiness accompanies salvation, and prepares for it, but not in a way of desert. The holiest man on earth, no more merits heaven than the most unholy. The work wrought in us is no more our justifying righteousness before God, than any work wrought by us. Nevertheless, holiness is absolutely necessary to eternal life.—(1) By a divine and unalterable constitution. God has enacted it as an immutable law, that neither sin nor sinner shall enter the celestial world. Sin once did, but the sinner never shall. Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle; who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart. But he shall come in flaming fire, to take vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Psal. xv. 1. 2 Thess. i. 8 —(2) Holiness is necessary as a preparative for heaven. It is both our evidence and meetness, not in form or shadow, but in substance and reality. None can sing the new song, or inhabit the new Jerusalem but those who have new hearts, and who walk in newness of life. Others are unqualified for the company, work, and enjoyment of the heavenly world. They shall not see God, for they do not desire to see him; or if they did, it would merely be to avoid the misery of an eternal banishment. Heaven would be no heaven to those whose chief happiness consists in the gratification of their sensual appetites and desires. They might like a heaven of their own making, but not that heaven which God reveals in his word, and which Christ is gone before to prepare for his people.

Learn from hence, O sinner, the evil of sin! It not *only exposes* to many afflictions and distresses in the *present life*, but excludes from happiness and glory

world to come. If sinners did but know what rnal glory and never-ending misery are, they would be so careless in seeking the one, nor in escaping m the other.

Should not those who are in any measure sanctified, hereby excited to seek after greater measures of ity; and desire that their evidences might be ghter and more satisfactory, so that an abundant rance may he administered unto them into the rlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus rist! Oh, how desirable, to have every corruption rtified, every grace invigorated, and to go from ngth to strength, till we appear before God in Zion ve! Then we shall behold his face in righteousness, l awake in his likeness. Psal. xvii. 15.

That we might walk with God,
He forms our hearts anew;
Takes us, like Ephraim, by the hand,
And teaches us to go.

He by his Spirit leads
In paths before unknown;
The work to be performed is ours,
The strength is all his own.

Assisted by his grace,
We still hold on our way,
With vigour run the heavenly race,
And read, and hear, and pray.

'Tis he that works to will,
'Tis he that works to do;
His is the power by which we act,
His be the glory too.

SERMON XIX.

ZECHARIAH iii. 2.

Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?

JOSHUA the high priest is here represented as trembling, while Satan turns accuser, and Christ becomes the intercessor. He who will be the judge of all, is his people's patron and protector. When they have not a word to say for themselves, he will speak for them, and silence those who speak against them. The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan! Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire? This was a word fitly spoken, and is like apples of gold in pictures of silver. What more delightful than to hear him say, whose testimony is always according to truth, and to say of us,—Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?

I. Offer a few general remarks on the text.

Under the form of an interrogation, the language is capable of being differently understood.

1. It may be considered as conveying a seasonable reproof to an insulting enemy. It is as if the Lord had said, Oh, thou monster of wickedness and cruelty, whose voracious mouth is like an open sepulchre, swallowing down thousands—art thou not satisfied? No: thou hopest to have this poor trembling sinner also for thy prey: but thou shalt be disappointed. Dost thou not know that he is one of my flock, given

to me of my Father, and who hath also given himself to me; whom therefore I am concerned to vindicate from thy reproaches, and to rescue from thy destructive and malignant power? Wilt thou have his blood, for whom I have engaged to shed my own? Dost thou say he is a transgressor? He is ready to acknowledge it with sorrow and shame; but he is also a believer. Look into his heart: whose image and superscription does he bear? Look into his life: there are innumerable sins, it is true: but they are repented of, and therefore forgiven. Amidst all his imperfections and failings, thou hast nothing to do with him. I claim a property in him, and will assert it: he is not thine, but mine.

2. The language may be considered as expressive of exultation and triumph. Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire? Yes: I rejoice in him as such. He is a pattern of my long-suffering, a monument of my grace. He is one of the lost sheep, whom I have found; the object of my Father's love, and mine. A rebel overcome, a wanderer restored, a sinner saved by grace. As Nebuchadnezzar said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty; so Christ may say of the church, his spiritual temple; and what he says of the church in general, is applicable to individual believers. They were his delight before he appointed the foundations of the earth, or gave the sea its bounds, and they will be so to all eternity. The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy, he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing. O happy people: O gracious and condescending Saviour! Zeph. iii. 17.

3. The expression carries in it the force of an affirmation. Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire? Thou knowest it is, thou canst not deny it; or if thou dost, I assert it to be so. The reed may be bruised but I will bind it up. The flax may yield an offensi-

smoke; but I will kindle it into a flame. I have followed this drooping sinner into his closet, I have seen him under the fig-tree; I can distinguish between the sinner and his sins. There is some good thing in him towards the Lord God of Israel. Accuse him, thou mayest; condemn him, thou canst not; destroy him, thou shalt not. He is a brand plucked out of the fire.

II. Consider to whom this language may be particularly applied.

It is applicable indeed to all who are finally saved, for they are as brands plucked out of the burning, and in the utmost danger of perishing; but there are some especially, to whom it is more immediately applicable.

1. Such as great and heinous transgressors, when converted from the error of their way, and turned effectually to God. Manasseh and Mary Magdalene were both of this description, sinners of no ordinary character. The account which Paul gives of his own conversion, places him also in the same class. He was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious. But I obtained mercy, says he, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief; and the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant, with faith, and love which is in Christ Jesus. What gratitude filled his heart, when he penned these words; what hatred of sin, and what affection to his Saviour! And when such a sinner, as wicked as the devil could make him, is transformed into a humble broken-hearted saint, and becomes a preacher of the faith which once he destroyed, surely it may be said, Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?

2. Old and accustomed sinners may be viewed in the same light, when they are brought to repentance, and to believe in Jesus. Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots; then may those who are

accustomed to do evil, learn to do well. This shews the great difficulty, but not the impossibility of the thing. Satan may be cast out of the strong hold which he has possessed, and deprived of the authority which he has usurped for many years; but it must be a stronger than he that must do it. An old sinner may become a young disciple, and a hardened offender melted into tenderness and love; but it is a work of surprising grace, and what the arm of the Lord only can effect. Of this we have an instance in the thief upon the cross: when his body was half dead, his soul was made alive to God, and he became a humble suitor to him whom he before despised; and now, instead of revilings and blasphemy, his broken accents are, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom! His hands and his feet were nailed to the cross, but his tongue was at liberty, and this he employs for Christ, both in pleading with him and for him, and reproving those who spoke against him. Nor was it a temporal salvation that he desired, but one that is eternal; he prayed not to be delivered from the cross, but to be admitted into heaven. St. Chrysostom calls this a greater miracle than the darkening of the sun, the trembling of the earth, or the rending of the veil of the temple. Surely this is also a brand plucked out of the fire.

3. There are some whose cases were despaired of by their friends, and all the means used for their reformation and conversion proved ineffectual, but who at length were redeemed by a mighty hand; and to these the language in the text may forcibly be applied. The hopeless condition of some is similar to that of the young man, whose father said, Lord, have mercy upon my son, for he is a lunatic, and sore vexed; oftentimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water; and I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him. *Alas, many such children have there been, who have almost broke their parents' hearts! They have prayed for them, instructed and corrected them, an*

perhaps engaged others to do the same; but prayer, preaching, reasoning, and reproof, have all been ineffectual. Yet when all other means have failed, God has taken the work into his own hands; and perhaps in some unthought of way, awakened them out of their lethargy, and brought them, like the prodigal, to a sense of their sin and duty. Such are the brands plucked out of the fire. Such was Onesimus, the runaway servant of Philemon. His master lost him, but Christ found him; and he returns with this commendation from Paul, the honoured instrument of his conversion. I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds; who in time past was to thee unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and to me. Phil. 10, 11.

4. Pardoning mercy has in some instances followed upon an overwhelming sense of guilt, and distressing apprehensions of divine wrath; and here again this language may be applied. The case of the Philippian jailor, and of those who were pricked in the heart under Peter's sermon, is of this description. The more deep and dangerous the wound is, the more remarkable will be the cure. The apostle Paul, whose convictions of sin were very strong, speaks of himself as a singular debtor to divine grace. The small still voice, speaking peace and consolation, is so much the more delightful, after the earthquake, the whirlwind, and the fire have passed by. I reckoned till morning, says Hezekiah, that as a lion, so will he break all my bones; from day even to night, wilt thou make an end of me. But how suddenly was the scene changed! The Lord was ready to save me; therefore we will sing my songs to the stringed instruments all the days of our life, in the house of the Lord. Isa. xxxviii. 13—20.

III. Notice the propriety of the description, in reference to the conversion of the ungodly.

1. A brand plucked out of the fire, was once a brand fit for the fire. There was no difference by nature, between Ahab and Manasseh, Judas and Peter. They were equally undeserving of the divine favour, equally obnoxious to the divine displeasure; all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh, and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. The most gracious were once graceless; the heart was once full of enmity, which is now enflamed with love; and the mouth filled with curses, which is now employed in prayer and in praise. All we like sheep have gone astray; we all wandered till God restored us from our wanderings; and should have wandered endlessly, if left to our own corrupt inclinations. Till God reveals his salvation, all that we do or can do, is to fit ourselves for destruction. Such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

2. A brand plucked out of the fire was very near being consumed, like the two legs, and piece of an ear, snatched by the shepherd out of the lion's mouth. Thus sinners are rescued, when they are just ready to be destroyed. Thus indeed it was promised, saying, It shall come to pass in that day, that the great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come who were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the Lord in the holy mountain at Jerusalem. Like as many who seemed near to heaven, will be cast down to hell; so others who were apparently near to destruction, are by sovereign grace made heirs of eternal salvation. I perish with hunger, says the prodigal; kill the fatted calf, says the forgiving father. Spiritual as well as temporal deliverances, often follow upon imminent danger, and are ushered in by amazing distress. His soul draweth

nigh to the grave, and his life to the destroyer: then he is gracious unto him, and saith, Deliver him from going down into the pit; I have found a ransom. Such is the situation of a miserable sinner, when mercy comes to his relief: our extremity is God's opportunity.

3. A brand plucked out of the fire, retains some evidence of its dangerous situation; though not consumed, it has seen the fire. And when the three Hebrew worthies were preserved in the burning fiery furnace, so that neither their hair was singed, nor their clothes changed, nor had so much as the smell of fire passed upon them, it was owing to the miraculous interposition of providence. But where shall we find a similar instance? Some marks of the violence of fire will be found upon the brand; and the effects of sin will still be found in those who are recovered from it, and from the hell which they deserved. The sinner, though he becomes a saint, is not free from indwelling corruption; the flesh still lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh. He must still have many conflicts with the powers of darkness. His old sores sometimes break out afresh, and he is made to feel that the danger is not all over. Doubts and fears about his state will often arise; and amidst his brightest hopes, he trembles lest he should be mistaken. Even in his happiest moments, he is constrained to say with the church of old, Remembering mine affliction and misery, the wormwood and the gall, my soul hath them still in remembrance, and is humbled in me. Lam. iii. 19, 20.

4. The brand plucked out of the fire, is no way instrumental to its own deliverance. No, there it must lie and burn, if some kind hand do not snatch it thence. An apostle speaks of some who are to be saved by fear, *pulling* them out of the fire; and thus it was with *thee, O* believer! Thou wouldst never have seen thy *danger,* if God had not opened thine eyes; nor wouldst

have been delivered from it, if he had not made his arm. It was he that impressed convictions, continued them in spite of all thine endeavours to : them. When thou didst linger on the plains of ›m, he laid hold of thy hand, and with a friendly ›nce brought thee forth; he rescued thee from the : imminent danger, and has been thy preserver ever ;. When dull and inactive, he has quickened thee; ı fainting, he has supported thee; and has many s prevented thee from that which would have ged thee into horror and disgrace. Well may we with the psalmist, Not unto us, O Lord, not unto but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and hy truth's sake. Psal. cxv. 1.

When I reflect on former sins,
  That vast, that countless sum,
They seem t'exclude all present hope,
  And threaten wrath to come.

And wrath to come had been my lot,
  Had not my Saviour died;
But pardon, peace, and endless joy,
  Come flowing from his side.

Then though I see those mountains rise,
  Those clouds spread all around;
To Christ my soul for safety flies,
  In him my help is found.

SERMON XX.

MATT. xix. 20.

All these things have I kept from my youth up. What lack I yet?

THIS was the language of the young man whom Jesus loved, on account of his amiable disposition and behaviour; and it is still the language of every self-righteous sinner, who by an outward conformity to the divine will has obtained some inward satisfaction, and fondly imagines that he has made his peace with God. Yet notwithstanding this self-complacency, which secured him from the lashes of an accusing conscience, he apprehended that something might still be wanting, at least to confirm and strengthen his title to eternal life; and therefore he enquires, "What lack I yet?" Apparently convinced of the importance of religion, and feeling the need of instruction, he came and said, "Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" The Lord Jesus, for wise ends, accommodating himself to the legal principle by which the enquirer was actuated, returned this answer: "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments," some of which he enumerated. The seemingly hopeful but really unhappy youth, without any hesitation, and as he thought, with a great deal of truth, makes the reply in the words of our text: "All these things have I kept from my youth up: What lack I yet?"

Let us first notice the Profession of this young ruler; and, secondly, his Enquiry. In the former, we shall see the nature of his religion; in the latter, its lamentable defects.

I. Consider his profession: "All these things have I kept from my youth up."

'I have not only made the law of God my study, but my practice. I have not only treasured it up in my memory, but exemplified it in my life. I have lived in all good conscience, and made the divine will the rule of my conduct. I have been sober, temperate, just, honest, kind, and benevolent. No man can accuse me: my own heart does not accuse me of any wilful transgression; and, as touching the law, I am blameless.'—Such appears to be the purport of his profession; and indeed it is such as would seem to warrant the high expectations he entertained, if righteousness could have been by the law.

1. His obedience was early. "These things, says he, have I kept *from my youth up*."—Good Obadiah could say, "I fear God from my youth." King Josiah also began to seek the Lord in the days of his youth, and while his heart was yet tender; and of Timothy it is said, that from a child he had known the holy scriptures. The young ruler thought he could say the same of himself, and therefore, does not hesitate to make the declaration. Probably he had had a religious education, and the principles he imbibed from his parents might have a strong and abiding influence. He had profited by early instruction, and imitated the example which had been set before him. If not inwardly pious, he was outwardly religious, and had been so from his earliest days. He remembered God when others forgot him, and walked in the path of duty at a period of life when the far greater number are found walking in the way of their own heart, and in the sight of their own

eyes. Though he did not go so far in religion as he ought to have done, yet there were very few who went so far as he did. He was not like the prodigal, who went into a far country, and spent his substance in riotous living; but, like a wise son, he made his father glad, and became the joy of her that bare him. His sobriety, temperance, and diligence afforded the most flattering prospects of future honour and usefulness, while his amiable accomplishments and virtuous dispositions had marked him out as the favourite of heaven.

2. His obedience was universal "*All these things*, says he, have I kept from my youth up."—Such ought our obedience to be, and such it will be, if directed by right principles. Some duties may be difficult, some expensive, and others dangerous; but a soul truly devoted to God, will not start back from any thing which he requires. Paul consulted not with flesh and blood, when God revealed his Son in him, and gave him a commission to preach the gospel, but instantly obeyed. David also, and Samuel, delayed not, but made haste to keep his commandments. So prompt, and so punctual should our obedience be. God requires, and it becomes us to yield him the obedience of the heart. Our compliance should be like his commandment, exceeding broad.—Such was the obedience professed by the young ruler. He had performed, as he supposed, every duty of the law, without exception and without delay. For want of a true knowledge of himself, and of the spirituality of the divine law, he might exaggerate, but did not wifully give a false account of the matter. He was blameless in the sight of men, and therefore hoped to be accepted of God.

3. It was constant and persevering. He had not only been early and universal in his obedience, but he had been so from his youth up even to this day.—It was *not* merely now and then, in a good mood, that he had *been* obedient to the divine will; nor under the pressure of affliction, like Pharaoh and Ahab, that he hum-

bled himself and feared the Lord; nor in the presence of those whose favour he coveted, or whose resentment he feared; but at all times he had obeyed the commandment, and had not wickedly departed from his God. Neither the frowns nor the smiles, the terrors nor the allurements of the world, could divert him from the course of duty. He does not speak of himself as being sometimes hot and at others cold, now pressing forward and then drawing back; but as being steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. Thus indeed it is with the christian, so far as he acts in character. Like the dutiful Hebrew servant, he says, 'I love my master: I love his service, and will not go out free.' The young ruler intimates this to be his case; and he appears to have been a singular instance of a uniform persevering moralist. Through the restraints of providence, the absence of temptation, a regard to his own character, the workings of natural conscience, or the hope of future reward, he had maintained such a line of conduct, and walked with so much circumspection, that he thought he might say of the precepts of the law, "All these things have I kept from my youth up."—Here we cannot help remarking,

1. How much the conduct of this young man condemns that of the generality of mankind, who, so far from having any thing of true religion, have not even the shadow of it. Instead of keeping the commandments, they are continually breaking them, and commit all manner of iniquity with greediness. Being filled with all unrighteousness, they not only commit sins worthy of death, but have pleasure also in those that do them; forgetting that God is now their observer, and will hereafter be their judge.

2. Those who have been preserved from such evils, and have attained a high degree of moral excellence, are apt to think better of their case than it really deserves. Had this fair moralist been acquainted with the purity and wide extent of the divine law, he would

have seen that instead of keeping, he had in effect broken all the commands, and had sinned in thought, where he had not in word and action. Had he never lusted in his heart, or been angry without a cause? If he had, and none can doubt it, he had violated the sixth and seventh commandment. He speaks of his obedience as early, universal, and constant; but it was forced, and not free; legal, and not evangelical. His outward conduct indeed was decent and amiable, but there were seven abominations in his heart which he knew not.

II. Notice his enquiry: "What lack I yet?"

Had this question been put to him, instead of being proposed by him; or had Christ said to him as he once did to the disciples, "Lackest thou any thing?" He would have answered, "Nothing, Lord." And though in its present form it discovers something of modesty and humility, yet in reality it contained much pride and vanity; and instead of seeking for instruction, he expected commendation and applause. It is as if he had said, 'Can any person so just, so circumspect, so even in his temper, and so just in his dealings, be still deficient in righteousness? Having abstained from every vice, and practised every virtue; who bids fair for heaven, if I do not?' It may be true that he possessed much of that which others wanted; but it is equally true that he wanted that which some possessed. His religion was essentially defective, and with all his morality, he was a stranger to true piety.

1. He lacked the true grace of God, or an inward principle of faith and holiness.—He was like a spreading tree, without root, a stately structure without a foundation. He boasted of his obedience, but wanted the spring from whence all true obedience must arise. No vital action can be performed without a vital *principle*; nor any holy duties without love to God.

He had many good things in him towards men, but nothing good in him towards the Lord God of Israel. He had the circumcision of the flesh, but not of the heart; many amiable qualities, but not the one thing needful. He wanted Christ without him as the ground of his confidence towards God, and Christ within him as the hope of glory; both a title to heaven, and a meetness for it. He seemed to think that scarcely any thing was wanting, whereas he needed every thing that constitutes the real christian, and all that he possessed was nothing in comparison of what he lacked. The fear of the Creator, the love of the Redeemer, and the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit, were all lacking; and then what avails his boasted righteousness! He lived soberly and righteously in the present evil world, but was a stranger to godliness, and to that grace which bringeth salvation.

2. He was deficient in the knowledge of himself, and of that misery in which sin had involved him.—So far from being converted, he was not truly convinced. He had not been roused from his carnal security, but remained at ease in the utmost danger; and his vain hopes deceived him, while his foolish lusts destroyed him. He neither saw the dreadful precipice beneath, nor the flaming sword above. Had he been awakened from his lethargy, and conscience truly alarmed, his hope would have given place to fear, and all his vain confidence would have failed him. Confusion would have covered him, and grief overwhelmed him. Instead of boasting of his own goodness, he would have deprecated the divine judgments; and instead of saying, "What lack I yet," he would have cried out, God be merciful to me a sinner! Far as this young man seemed to go in religion, he had not so much as entered the threshold, nor learned the first lesson in the school of Christ. The trembling jailor, who cried out in the anguish of his soul, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved," could

have taught him what at present he knew not—t
evil and the plague of his own heart.

3. He lacked a justifying righteousness in which
appear before God.—His own righteousness, how f
soever it might seem, could not atone for sins comm
ted, nor recommend him to the Divine favour. T
Lord seeth not as man seeth, nor judgeth as m
judgeth. A righteousness so essentially deficient is n
pleadable at his bar, nor can be acceptable in his sig
The covering is too thin that a man should wrap hims
in it, too narrow and too straight that he should stret
himself upon it. The obedience of a fallen creatu
can neither hide his deformity nor screen him fr
divine wrath. The guilt of sin still remains upon hi
and the filth of sin still cleaves unto him. Notwi
standing the ruler had kept the commandments fr
his youth up, yet there was one that accused him, ev
Moses in whom he trusted; and if God had enter
into judgment with him, immediate and eternal mise
would have been his portion. His case was deplorabl
and without a Saviour, it would be remediless.
was his happiness that the Saviour was now at han
that he conversed with him who is the Lord our rigl
eousness, and who could save him to the uttermos
but it was his great unhappiness not to know him; n
to feel his need of him. Being whole in his own eyes,
wanted not the physician, nor came to Christ that
might have life.

4. With all his professions he was not weaned fro
earthly objects.—The world had taken possession of h
heart, and it still retained its dominion there. Cove
ousness was his prevailing sin, the love of money h
ruling passion. He could be religious, and yet s
premely selfish; pious in his way, but not benevolen
and was a stranger both to the love of God and ma
Amidst great riches, he had a poor contracted hear
and though he wished to enter into life, the difficulty

the way prevented him. He was carnally minded, and set on carnal things. When Jesus bid him part with all that he had, and follow him, this hard saying put a stop to all farther enquiries; and "he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions." When there was a contest between heaven and earth, God and mammon, his choice shewed the real state of his heart, and his enmity to true religion. Glory, honour, immortality, and eternal life gave way to present honour, ease, and riches; and the covetous worldling remained a covetous worldling still.

Let us conclude with two or three reflections.

1. We see that though grace puts sinners on the enquiry about salvation, yet all enquirers are not truly gracious: many ask the way to Zion whose faces are not thitherward. We may enquire of ministers, and even go to God himself, and not be sincere in our applications. Pilate said, What is truth; but did not wait for an answer. The three thousand under Peter's sermon were pricked in the heart, and cried out, what they must do to be saved; but the apostle still preached to them the necessity of repentance, as though they had not yet repented after a godly sort. Conviction may end in conversion, but we are not sure that in every instance they will do so; and we should be careful not to mistake the one for the other.

2. Mistakes with respect to the spiritual state of men are more common than most people imagine. There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, who yet are not washed from their iniquity. The Laodiceans thought themselves increased in goods, and that they had need of nothing; and yet were poor, and wretched, miserable, blind, and naked. The foolish virgins did not discover their mistake till it was too late, and wanted to buy oil when neither prayers nor tears could suffice. Be not deceived: God is not mocked. Whatever else we trifle with, let us not trifle with him, nor with the concerns of our own souls.

3. We here see what is the right use of the divine law: by it is the knowledge of sin. Our Lord preached and applied it to the young ruler; and had the latter applied it to himself, he would have seen his folly in trusting to it as the medium of life, and have felt his need of an all-sufficient Saviour. But being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish his own righteousness, he did not submit himself to the righteousness of God. Had the commandment come home to his conscience by the power of the Holy Spirit, sin would have revived, and he would have died to all hopes of acceptance with God by any works of righteousness which he had done, and would gladly have embraced the gospel way of salvation.

In vain to Sinai's mount,
In our distress we fly;
This is the sentence of the law,
The soul that sins shall die.

It stops the mouth, and can
No real help afford;
It bars the way to paradise,
As once the flaming sword.

It leaves us under wrath,
Unrighteous and unclean;
It neither satisfies for guilt,
Nor purifies from sin.

The gospel only shows
The way of life and peace;
'Tis not by works that we can do,
But we are sav'd by grace.

THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRAR
REFERENCE DEPARTMENT

This book is under no circumstances to
taken from the Building